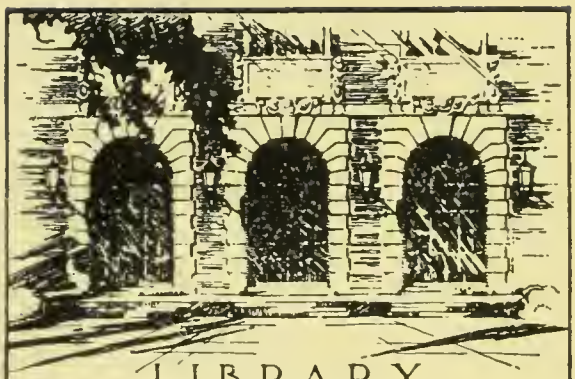

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WOMAN'S DEVOTION.

A NOVEL.

"I meant the day-star should not brighter ride,
Nor shed like influence from its lucent seat;
I meant she should be courteous, facile, sweet,
Free from that solemn vice of greatness—Pride;
I meant such softest virtue there should meet,
Fit in that softer bosom to abide;
Only a learned and a *manly* soul,
I purposed her; that should with even powers
The rock, the spindle and the shears controul
Of Destiny, and spin her own free hours."

BEN JONSON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,
SUCCESSORS TO HENRY COLBURN,
13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.
1855.

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WOMAN'S DEVOTION.

CHAPTER I.

"It is very naughty of Elmore, always making such a joke of me," said Mimi, pouting, as she finished this long letter.

"I do not understand," said Frank, with somewhat of the haughtiness of his mother, "why, if Elmore likes Mimi, he encourages such extraordinary—"

"Elmore loves me very much indeed," exclaimed Mimi, "and I am very proud he does, because

nothing produced that love, but his own kind heart. He encourages only what is true and right, and he thinks—yes, he thinks, by this time you will see what is most fit to be done."

"Mimi, you are mad; never can I see what you think," exclaimed Frank, angrily.

Mimi abruptly left the room, her cheeks coloured crimson, her eyes flashing. That Frank should so utterly ignore the existence of a person whom Elmore seemed to consider, not only living, but worthy of his notice and correspondence, was more than her temper could stand.

If Frank did not see, she did, Elmore's kind intentions in thus bringing forward the long-prohibited name, though she pretended to pout and be angry at his allusions. And was Mimi really anxious still to become the wife of her mother's page? Had not time dispelled the allusion, absence caused the true facts to appear in their proper colours? Admired, loved, courted, did not Mimi feel within her that this year had

been to her, that peculiar period of improvement and self-culture, that almost always occurs to the opening mind of youth. They feel within them the perception of what before had to be shown to them, and perhaps to be inculcated and enforced. It is at this period, this time, that the mind expands so rapidly; the young enthusiast imagines, under the excitement of such new and delightful feelings, no fate is too grand for him, there is nothing that he cannot accomplish.

Thus Mimi, under this new existence delighting as she delighted, may have thought herself capable of fulfilling the highest earthly destiny, and have deplored the weak and foolish act she had committed in a paroxysm of passion.

But who could tell what her thoughts were? Happy, gay, animated, and apparently indifferent to ought save the love of her godson, Mimi lived like a bright picture illuminating the house. Nest knew; within that careless, laughter-loving heart, Nest was aware that other

feelings were rising, besides those of increased wisdom, and easy self-possession. Thoughts of high import, vows of holy resolution, prayers of love, gratitude, and praise. Mimi was tasting the delights of religion for the first time, and drank eagerly from the delicious fount.

What effect these new feelings had upon her future fate, time must show,. One thing was sufficiently clear, that Frank's mind was made up as to what he thought was proper for her to do, while Nest . . . . Nest said nothing. Nevertheless, Mimi knew, without a word passing between either of them, that they thought alike, and when the time came, what they thought would be spoken.

Meantime, they were interested to know the end of Elmore's adventure, and were very glad to receive his promised letter within a week of the other.

THE DUKE'S LETTER.

"WELL, my dear mother, you must not

be alarmed at the bulk of my despatch, for I have a real adventure to relate to you. And though Stewart may tell you, 'His Grace aye gets his deserts,' on hearing of my escapades, yet leave his remark until the end of my letter, when you will find I got well out of them all, and deserve his encomiums.

"You know, mother, I am not partial to forward young ladies; vide Miss West. Therefore, spite of her beauty, I did not respond to the liquid-beseeching eyes of my Thisbe quite as warmly as she expected. In fact, I asked such matter-of-fact questions regarding her aim in requiring my attentions, that those same dark eyes began to look indignant and puzzled. I believe a Spanish woman never forgives any common-place sort of common-sense, when she is in question; so she bestowed upon me a few wrathful flashes, that did much to enlighten my mind, before she also assumed a business-like air.

"She informed me, then, that an English

Señor was ill, at her father's house. That owing to the fair, their servants had left the house, and gone to amuse themselves, and she alone was left in attendance on the Señor. He was ill, very ill; incessantly he cried for something, she could not tell what. Unable to bear his ravings longer, she had set forth to seek for help, and hearing that some of his countrymen had come to this palacio, she had ventured thither, in hopes of aid. Now, my dear mother, excuse my saying, of a woman and a lady, as I presumed she was, I did not believe one word she said; nevertheless, being an Englishman, it behoved me to act as if I did. So buttoning up my coat, in the pockets of which I had two faithful little friends, I did what Pyramus could not do, took a standing-spring over the wall. Thisbe looked unutterably amazed at this feat of British daring, and examined me from head to foot, as if she suspected that I was made of steel-springs and india-rubber; an expression of doubt and some-

what of dismay flitted across her countenance, which I interpreted into the fact, that I was rather too strong and active, to suit her peculiar views. But only confiding to some saint her ideas on the subject, we proceeded down a long and narrow street, where, for my sins, all the odours that ever tormented a sensitive nose, seemed to have congregated.

"The cottage luxury of fried onions and cabbage, would have seemed to me eau-de-cologne itself in comparison.

"On our road, I thought I would do a little business of my own, in the way of deception, so that I might match my Thisbe if possible; so putting on that insinuating manner, which Mimi knows is almost irresistible (I say almost only to her), I tried my hand at flirting, for the first time, and really succeeded so well, I was quite pleased with myself; 'Cheer up, old fellow! though Mimi will not deign to look upon you, others will,' thought I.

"Thisbe responded rather too freely, and

with the mobility of a Spanish face, her whole appearance assumed that of a coquette. Arch and demure, when I asked her, 'How many lovers she had?' tender and confused, when I vowed myself one; haughty and proud, when I presumed to be rather free; alluring and bewitching if I, what is called by English housemaids, 'behaved myself;' in fact, she acted her part to perfection. While I flattered myself I was equally successful, for the little jade grew confident, and could scarcely repress her look of gratified triumph. I have no doubt she thought to herself, 'Tall, large, strong, and spring-like as he is, a little Spanish donna can twist him round her finger.'

"We arrived at the porte-cochere of a large, old, isolated mansion, the door of which she opened, and I followed her in. We went through various corridors, until we came to a low, dark room, with a strong, iron-capped door. As I carelessly glanced at the lock, I perceived it shut with a spring, whereupon,

holding the door with one hand, I surveyed the dirty-looking apartment with unqualified disgust, and said to Thisbe:

" 'Where is the sick man?'

" 'Noble Señor, be seated. I go to prepare him.'

" 'Gracias, fair one; but as for sitting down in such a dirty hole, excuse me.'

" She looked at me with some surprise, not to say mortification, and then glanced round the apartment, as much as to say, 'Who could object to so beautiful a room?' Willing to give her a chance of repentance, still holding the door in my hand, I answered her look by saying,

" 'This is a dog-kennel; faugh! odious! I will wait in the corridor until you prepare the sick man.'

" 'Noble caballero, valiente Inglese, come, pray come, this room is good, sweet; the sick man is beyond, he is here; come, oh! come.'

"She threw into her eyes a look so unmistakeable in its effort to allure me in, that I could not help laughing at her aloud, and with a polite 'Excuse the liberty, Señorita,' I proceeded to do, what I presume she meant to have done by me; which was neighbourly, at all events; I shut the door upon her, and locked her up; her scream of anger and disappointment shot through the key-hole right into my ear, and I felt her throw herself heavily against the door, trying to open it, as I drew the bolt.

"Leaving her to chew the cud of our mutual experiences of each other's characters, I examined my pistols, and then proceeded to make a general survey of the house.

"Not wishing to be taken for a thief, or an eaves-dropper, and being careless as to the effect of such a thing upon my personal safety, I marched through the saloons and corridors with the noise and vibration of a dozen men.

Not a soul did I meet, not even a mouse was to be seen; even the plagues of Spain were not visible, hopping about, in their native dust.

"At last I came to a door, similar in look and strength to the one which held my Thisbe prisoner. It was bolted as fast.

"With natural curiosity to know if it caged a rightful captive, I knocked, and was answered immediately, to my utter amazement, in good, unmistakeable English, spoken in a voice, too, familiar to me.

"I unbarred and unbolted the door as quickly as I could, wasting some few precious moments in finding the spring to open it, which caused the captive within to give voice to sundry very impatient and improper expressions, belonging peculiarly to John Bull. However, when I succeeded in opening it, I was fully prepared to find the caged bird was Hill.

"'Good heavens! Nairn, is that you? How came you here? Thank God for it; ask no

questions, come along; five minutes ago, I thought I was a dead man. If ever I catch that little bewitching demon in petticoats; but come along, come along, ask no questions, and be quiet, still as death, if you love your life.'

"Now, considering I had never opened my lips, and was standing transfixed mutely at his behaviour, I thought his advice, to say the least of it, unnecessary.

"'Cavendish is here,' he continued; 'was nabbed as well as me; hang all black eyes, say I; we must try to get him out. Where he is put, or what has become of him, I cannot tell.'

"'We will go and see,' said I; 'but first, I'll put this door as it was, that the bird may not be supposed to have flown.'

"'Quite right, excellent idea,' answered the excited Hill; 'my dear fellow, what good angel wafted you here? and who would have supposed such a little, lovely innocent . . . .'

"'Come, come, let us to work, to save

Cavendish; there are only you two pigeons taken, are there?'

"'No, not any of the others would see the adventure out, though she tried to beguile us all. I'll tell you the whole fact as it happened.'

"'You will do no such thing, for I know it without; and if you were in the place of Cavendish . . . .'

"'Heaven and earth, yes! where shall we find that poor fellow?'

"'Have you your pistols?'

"'Yes; they have not had time to rob me yet. From the scuffle, I could hear they were going to settle Cavendish, before they favoured me with their company.'

"'We must proceed cautiously.'

"This we did; upstairs and downstairs we crept, passing the door that held the lovely Thisbe safe, once or twice. When I whispered this fact to Hill, it was as much as I could do, to prevent his rushing in, and upbraiding her,

then and there, with all the eloquence of a deceived British lion. But the fate of Cavendish was beginning to trouble us acutely.

"At last, in a wall in the garden, we discovered a sort of iron gate, which yet showed on it marks of greasy fingers.

"'How quick you are to see that,' whispered Hill to me, as I pointed them out.

"'A Spaniard is made up of oil and garlic,' whispered I, in return. 'I smell the latter now, which proves to me, we are scenting our game.'

"Cautiously opening the door, we peeped into what appeared a small court. Down some steps was another door, such as respectable English noblemen have in their gardens, to imprison the ice, so necessary for their delicate palates.

"I don't know if Hill's heart beat, mine did, as we let ourselves through it, into a dampish sort of a subterranean passage. On we went, with a more sure certainty of un-

earthing our fox, as we heard voices, besides the olfactory indication.

"We came to a little ante-chamber; beyond, through an archway, was a dungeon-like apartment, in which we had the satisfaction of seeing, still alive, our friend Cavendish, though not in peculiarly happy circumstances; for he was stripped of his own clothes, and the dirtiest rag of a cloak (no doubt, very lively) was hung in Roman fashion over one shoulder, giving a peculiarly forlorn appearance to his already most dolorous visage. He was apparently bound to a staple in the wall, in bands tied from anything but affection, if one could judge by his distortions of countenance and frame. Two remarkably disagreeable personages stood guard over him, while eight or ten more, though we did not see so many from our lair, were sitting at a rude table, upon which was placed all the property, in clothes, money and valuables, so lately adorning the person of Cavendish.

"We listened, and heard a courteous sort of

a voice distributing these things, and, finally, heard him say to Cavendish, 'Señor, your signature to this is required.'

"'For what?' groaned he, in answer.

"'It is a draft for so many reals, for ransom.'

"'I won't sign it.'

"'Then, Señor, it is painful, but . . . .' here the click of a pistol-lock was heard, giving singular significancy to the rest of the sentence.

"Hill was for rushing forward to the rescue.

"'Hist!' whispered I, 'they only mean to alarm him.'

"But Cavendish was more obstinate than I expected, and exclaiming, after looking at the draft,

"'Why, that is £500 of our money! go and be hanged. I am not worth as much, and if I was, I would die sooner, than give it to you.'

"To my surprise, when the gentleman handed

the draft to Cavendish to look at, and placed himself so as I could see him, I perceived he was the hero of our yesterday's adventure.

"Handsome and smiling as ever, with all his jewellery tinkling and shaking about him, no wonder he looked triumphant. He counted upon having no less than three of those 'moldito Inglese' in his power, and a pretty revenge he meant to take upon them, for his double disappointment of yesterday.

"We ought to go for the Alcalde, constables, police, or something,' whispered Hill.

"'Yes, if there is time, but I think there is not; Cavendish seems inclined to provoke them into a speedy settlement of his fate.'

"'I don't fear a dozen of them; but what we ought to do, is to secure them. I shall not die happy, if I do not have my revenge on that little artful—Ah! see, Nairn, they have loosened Cavendish, to enable him to write; poor fellow! if he could only see us, how comforted he

would be. He would sign the paper like a man.'

"In his endeavours to give Cavendish this comfort, he lost sight of prudence. As our friend caught sight of Hill's eager face, so did the banditti.

"'There is no help for it now, Hill; act as if there were dozens of us behind.'

"Calling aloud, as if to summon others, we rushed forth. Cavendish was already making use of his released fists, in a way very different to what had been intended when they were freed.

"The scrimmage was a very slight one, as the banditti had no arms with them but their stilettos. They deemed themselves so secure, as to have left the rest in some other place, while they treated with the prisoner, in his dungeon.

"It is hardly possible to say, how quickly the affair was over. They were ready to cry quarter, ere we had commenced the assault,

which was accounted for by the fact, they thought a regiment of reserves were behind us.

"Their rage and indignation was great, when, after being bound helplessly together, they discovered they had succumbed to three beef-eating Englishmen.

"Locking nine of them in Cavendish's dungeon, we carried off the discomfited chief to the Alcalde, together with the amiable little decoy duck, whose beauty became hideous, when distorted by passion.

"Hill had his revenge; he undertook to convey her as his trophy to the Alcalde, and treated her much as a cat does a mouse. Offering her sundry opportunities of freedom, for so many kisses, and then rejecting them with contempt, as something poisonous, and Judas-like, until poor little Thisbe was in such a state of passion and tears, that I was very glad when we arrived.

"She took leave of me with such a torrent

of vituperative Spanish, I was inclined to think it was a good thing my knowledge of the language was limited; and then having exhausted herself, she could only do as cats do, and, as Hill afterwards declared, did it better than any cat he ever saw.

"They had met her at the bull-fight; she sat in the next seat to theirs, and quickly, by the witchery of her eyes and face, had captivated Hill. Cavendish consented to go with him, more because two in a strange country are safer than one. And she, having, with the true gusto of a Spanish woman, seen three bulls slain, (what would Stewart say to such slaughter among his beloved short-horns?)—had departed from the arena, giving them an invitation by her eyes to follow her.

"The captain of the banditti had been prowling about after the English party, in search of revenge; and missing 'el grande Inglese' from among the others, at the bull-fight, had discovered his retreat; and thus it was, mother,

that my last letter to you was interrupted by the wicked, but lovely eyes of Thisbe.

"You may be sure, that though conquerors, and crowned with laurel—for the inhabitants of Rhonda treated us to a sort of ovation, for destroying this band of thieves—we were not sorry to quit it.

"Lovely, rich, sin-laden land, I bid you adieu. May there be more of heaven, and less of earth, in your people and country, when next I see you. I am thinking of going to see the Sphinx.

"Ever your son, my mother."

CHAPTER II.

"THE moral of Elmore's tale is, 'don't trust banditti,' therefore it is of no use to us in right merrie England," said Mimi.

"Elmore is very rash," answered Nest. "I think we must go over to Nairn, and see my aunt; she may be unhappy about him."

"Then we can take the precious letter back again. But I do not think, if there had been any real danger, that he would have mentioned it. He treats the whole affair in a very joking style, and they must have been downright

cowards, to have suffered three Englishmen to take ten of them."

"They had fire arms, you know, which makes a vast difference."

"Besides fists, which I have heard said, no one knows how to use but an Englishman: also they have verified the following elegant stanzas, allowing four to Elmore's share, in deference to his size and rank:—

"'One Frenchman beat two Portugee;
One Englishman come, and he rompit all three.'"

"Where did you pick up such ridiculous stuff, Mimi?" said her brother.

"It is absolutely quoted in an English history, my Lord," answered Mimi, mockingly.

They found the good Duchess more pained at the idea of Elmore's prolonged absence, than with his adventures.

"He seems to think, not only of going to Egypt, but America," said she.

"What did Stewart say, aunt?" said Mimi.

"He says nothing to me, my dear, because he knows I am a fellow-sufferer; but if he was to meet you, he would, no doubt, give voice to his disgust."

"I will go and see if he is in his room," said the mischief-loving Mimi.

"Pray go with her, Nest," said the Duchess; "if any thing can soothe him, it will be a visit from you."

Mimi entered the lion's den first, and was received with such a frosty visage and stiff bow, that a less bold heart would have quailed. When he saw Lady Gomer, a grim smile came over his face, and he proceeded to do the honours of his apartment, by thrusting forward two chairs.

"I tak it vara kind of you, my Leddy, to veesit an auld failing mon."

"I do not see much symptoms of failing about you, Mr. Stewart; you look to me not a day older, than when you came to Coadmore."

"Ou ay; but I'll no forget those times."

"Why not, Stewart?" asked Mimi.

"I had joost a sort o' glink fra his Grace—save me, but I hae promised mysel' I'll sae his naime nae mair, the feckless body, ganging his gaits fra win end o' the warld to the tither, leeving her Grace and me joost dodthering into the grave wi' fretting and o'er-wark. See till his last writing noo, which her Grace, kenning I'm aye as anxious as hersel', was sae guid as to gie me the reading on. My certie, ladies, but what an awfu' writing that war."

"We have seen it, Mr. Stewart, we have just brought it home; and, like you, I think the Duke should not be so rash, should be careful, if but for his mother's sake."

"Ay, but her Grace has mickle to bear. Bringing oop his Grace to be the pride o' the countra, fa' and wide, making aye body that catched a glint o' his een, that prood and pleased, naithing was like it; sae guid in a' ways, ganging in a' the laws i' the commandments, as near as ony other Christian body,

and nearer by far; joost a mon, as if ever weak mon aye did so, as carried the warld in his hond, he was that gracious, and goodly favoured; a mon, noo, that nane ever saw the like. Ay, leddies, but I could tell ye sich grand tales o' his Grace!"

"Do tell us them," said Mimi, eagerly.

"Na, na; I hae taken a voo, I'll no mention his naime, he's gaen that demented. I'd be gay pleased if his Grace had getting joost a bit crackt o' his pate; that, may-be's, wad hae sent him hame, to be nursed oop; and servit him recht, for consorting wi' banditti folks, and Jezebels, and Thisbes. He's joost a haythen, nae mair, nor nae less; and though I am vara prood he knocket over them robbers, joost for a' the world like nine-pins, and wadna I hae helpit him, wi' nought but a bit stick; and I am thinking we twa wad joost hae sattled them a'; for aye, leddies, his Grace, for a' he's a Douke, is that strong and active, it's maist a pity he's no a labouring mon. What a soight

o' wark he'd do! But what for business had he in such an ill place, fulish body, naebody kenning that he's a' the warld to Nairn, let alane her Grace and me? I'se joost fashed wi' him, and I'se no ganging to think ony mair on him, and his evil ways."

"Then tell us, why you will not forget going to Coadmore?" asked Mimi.

"Weel, ye must knaw, Miss Gomer, my Lord being but a fulish young mon like (excuse me, my Leddy), but his Grace (the Lord forgie me, aye forgetting ma voo), any ways twa on us, him and me, had oure ain opinions as to my young Lord, and that no being accustomed to right wimmen folks at home—"

"Come, come, Stewart, you forget me."

"Yer a grand Leddy the noo, Miss Gomer; but wha hae ye to thank for that, think ye?"

"Go on, Stewart, I will allow all you say."

"Yer joost a bit jewel now, hinny; excuse an auld man. Weel, we thought as my Lord wadna hae mickle sense, in chosing of his ain

true luve. For my pairt, I joost thought she wad be a sort of bit rosy, simple lassie, a' smiles and no sighs."

"Why was she to have sighs, Stewart?"

"It's no right to gang through this world, Miss Gomer, a' smirks and smiles. If ye hae nae sorrows o' yer ain, ye suld aye sigh for them as has. Ony how, a giggling lassie's no my fancy."

"But you thought it would be my husband's," said Nest, smiling.

"Weel, my Leddy, he had nae opportunities o' a judgmatical kind. I hae been aff and on here at Nairn these mony years, and I ken my Leddy Jane weel, fra' a bit lassie, and it's no ways uncommon for them as lives wi' her, taking up wi' ony cheerful smilin' face, and ne'er heeding the sense beneath."

"I see what you mean, Stewart, and I think you are quite right; a cheerful, happy face, is worth all the beauty in the world."

"Weel, weel, Miss Gomer, hae yer say,

for ye have baith, the noo, and plenty o' sense."

"Oh! Stewart, you make me blush; go on, with your visit to Coadmore."

"I ganged there, wi' a fu' heart, kenning what a troost his Grace had gien me. Ah! puir body, he knows weel the awfu' straits of matrimony, being nigh hond it once his-self; but pity me, if I hae na loighted on his name agin. I took counsel wi' the Lord, on my journey there, and thought I was nae mair nor less than as the steward of Abraham of ancient days, and it behooved me to cast my cares on the Lord. I kenned the marriage wad be the making or undoing of my Lord, and that I mun be as discreet and knowledgable as if I was trysting mysel'; and that, leddies, joost reminds me, may be one may excuse his Grace ganging off i' this fickless manner, and acting as if he had nae mair brains in his skool than a barber's toopee; he's aye a batchelor, joost like mysel'."

"I have often wondered why Elmore did not marry, Stewart," said Mimi; "did he not intend it once?"

"Ay, and I'll no deny she was a sweet young leddy, though I never seed ony woman fit for him, but wan, wan only."

"And who was she?" asked Mimi.

"Hoot awa, hinny! dinna fash me, when I'm divarting ye with my joorney to Wales, whar I arrived a' in due course, and was shewn in to the fine old leddy. My certie, but I sune fund the Lord had blessed me like the steward of Abraham; and the bonny young leddy, as she had hae the broughtings up, must be aye fit for ony mon. Ye mauna greet, my Leddy Gomer, ye ken the Lord's will concerning her. She's as the shining stars of heaven, if ever Christian body war. I did na see the young leddy for some whiles, she was oot, roaming i' the sands, but between ou're cracks o' business, and sich loike, I was aye making a picter o' her, in my mind. Fine and tall, wi' a comely

majesty o' countenance, and a grave and gracious way, when I seed standing right forhent me, the bonniest, loveliest lassie my auld eyes ever saw. There was a smile on her pretty rosy lips, that sent a sweet sparkle oop into them eyes. I joost was transfixed, as if a body had stooked my feet to the flure, and she gave sich luike at me, I was beginning to speer for the pratty silver wings of an angel, when she stepped oop to me, and pit her little saft white hand into mine."

"Ah! Nest, how you blush; I knew you did not think Stewart was describing you at first."

"You know, Mr. Stewart, I could not but be anxious you should like me," said Nest, half smiling, half confused; "I was ready to love any one, coming from my dear Frank's home."

"Ou, aye, I kenned at ae glint, my Lord had nae need for his Grace and me to help him, and I was joost distracted wi' anger and vexation; but hoot, hoot! I ax yer pardon, leddies, I am

joost that busy, I hae nae mair time to gan clacken on i' this daft way."

"Nonsense, Stewart! that is nothing but an excuse; I want you to tell me all about this lady Elmore loved so well, and why he did not marry her," said Mimi.

"She was a vary pratty young leddy, and it was the Lord's wull, his Grace hadna her for his wife."

"But how, Stewart?"

"If ye mun ken the truth, Miss Gomer, the Lord tuk her till himself."

"I thought she was dead; but there always seemed something rather mysterious about the whole story."

"Dinna seek to ken mair, Miss Gomer, it's an awfu' story, and nae wonder his Grace greets to this day; and its aye looky for him, I hae sich a tender heart in my bosom, feelin' for his waes, or, my certie but he shuld ken my mind, wi' his gallivantings, his Pyramees, and Jezebels. What for has a Douke ony business to gang

about the warld like common folk, and a Douke like our'n? It's nae use haggling on mair, I'll joost gan demented, and sae will her Grace, and I'll be vara pleased, leddies, to want yer coompany."

"You mean, you want us to go, Stewart."

"I'm that beesy, it's nae use being ceevil."

"Forgive us, at all events, for intruding upon you so long," said Lady Gomer.

"Forgie ye! ou aye; I'll forgie ye a' things but ane, and that ye cannot mend, so farweel, leddies, I'm no lang for this warld; and if I suld na see ye agin, ye hae an auld fulish body's blessing ony hoo."

"Stewart was very cross with us, aunt," said Mimi, when they returned to the summer parlour; "he was cross about everything, and, spite of his disgust at Elmore's conduct, he bemoaned and bewailed after him, as if he had lost 'his ain true love,' as he calls it. How he does love him!"

"Yes, I verily believe he thinks of nothing else."

"He spoke, aunt, of his having nearly married once."

"Yes, love; but the tragedy that prevented his marriage was distressing to the last degree. Some of these days I may tell it to you; but just now, Mimi, when he is absent from me, I do not like to recall it."

"So, Mimi," said Nest, as they drove home together, "your curiosity was snubbed to-day."

"Yes, was it not? and I only heard enough of Elmore's history, to make it still more ungovernable. I'll find out the real facts some day, in spite of them."

CHAPTER III.

NEST, about this time, received a letter from Mr. Llewellyn, full of the praises of the excellent, clever young man, she had entrusted to his care. As it contained nothing else but praises of Hugh, and those praises being all of a highly satisfactory nature, Nest took the letter to her husband.

Frank's brow grew dark, and he said, as he finished it, "What object had you in giving me this letter, Nest?"

"The year is nearly out, Frank, and you will have to prepare for Mimi's decision."

"You do not suppose," returned he, "she will have the madness to consider that marriage ceremony binding? and that she will disgrace her family, by avowing such a thing?"

"I think you will have to make up your mind to this, dear Frank."

"I cannot, and I will not," said he; "surely, Nest, you cannot have encouraged this foolish, quixotic feeling!"

"No, I have never even spoken to her on the subject; but still I think that will be her choice. And we are bound now to let her have her own way, for she has fairly performed her part of the compact."

"I grant she has, but I truly hope she will yet see the folly of it. I know so many excellent high marriages for her; nay, I have already had proposals for her, unexceptionable in every way; and you know her marriage was not legal, for she was under age. I wish Elmore would come home; he would, I am certain, reason

with her; and if any one could persuade her, he would."

"I half think, Frank, that he would not hold the same opinion as you do on the subject. But, see! here is a horseman galloping up, his horse in a foam; I pray it may be no ill news from Laurel Grove."

"The livery is not grey; I think he looks like one of my mother's servants."

It was indeed a servant from Lady Jane, who delivered a letter to Lord Gomer; the perusal of which melted both his and Nest's heart. It was written under circumstances of real mental agony, and certainly with reason.

"Mr. Malcolm," it stated, "after a series of brutal and ungentlemanly conduct, had at last gone off with Lady Jane's maid, and they had carried with them every thing of value that she possessed, besides robbing her of a large sum of money. She had sent to the police station at York, for measures to be imme-

diately taken for their apprehension. But above every thing, she besought her son's instant attendance, and condolence."

"My poor mother!" said Frank.

"It is very, very sad, dear Frank, and she is all alone, with no one to pity or comfort her."

"True, for she will not thank you for coming, my Nessie, and I don't like asking her here."

"Go quickly to her, dearest, at all events, and use your own judgment as to what you will consider best for her relief and comfort."

"Do you give me then *carte blanche* to act as I think best?" said Lord Gomer.

"Yes, dearest Frank, for I feel sure, that whatever you settle to do, will be kind and good."

"You fully trust me then?"

"Fully, Frank."

Ah! Nest, if you had but known the sole relief that Lady Jane was counting upon; the

sole comfort that she would accept, you would not have let your Frank so easily from your sight.

To Lord Gomer's amazement, his mother peremptorily ordered him, as soon as she saw him, to go and search the world over, until he found the wretch, as she styled her spouse, and shoot him.

"I beg your pardon, mother, but really you must excuse me. What! debase myself by going out with a swindler and a black-leg! I'll kick, or horsewhip him, if you like; but as to calling him out, and allowing him the honour of a shot at me, I'll give him no such satisfaction."

But his mother would listen to no reason on the subject. Nothing would satisfy her, but that her son ought to shoot her husband; and she grew so madly irritable, at what she considered his supineness at the insult she had received, that he was fain to soothe her, by a sort of compromise.

She had sent for Sir John West, who arrived shortly after her son, and who, for reasons best known to himself, warmly entered into her views of the case; saying in expressive terms, that if Frank did not choose to vindicate his mother's insulted honour, he should certainly call Mr. Malcolm out himself.

This strong advocate in her favour, made Lady Jane more strenuous; so that at last, fearing for her life and reason, Frank said,—

"Well, mother, well; against my better judgment, I will go and seek this man. If he can raise his hand against me, let him do it. But for my part, so that you are satisfied, by my calling him out, and letting the world see there has been a duel for your sake, I shall not attempt to shoot at a man who has lived in my house, and drunk of my cup, for so many years."

That there should be a duel, seemed all that Lady Jane really cared for; so, writing a note to Nest, saying that he had gone, at his mother's

request, to seek for Mr. Malcolm, and she must not expect him until she saw him; he set out with a heavy heart, Sir John West accompanying him.

"How you can, as a man of the world, counsel me to do this ungentlemanly act, I cannot conceive, West," said Lord Gomer.

"Nothing else will comfort your mother," said Sir John.

"But the man is a thief, and if caught, will be put in gaol. Do you suppose I will compromise my good name, by going out with such a fellow as that?" said Frank, indignantly.

"Your mother has not told you the real story; for, in fact, old Malcolm is not so much to blame. He did not go off with the maid, neither did he steal anything. It seems they came to very high words, and he was heard to say, he would rather live in a dog-kennel, than with her any longer; and she told him, the sooner he went, the better she would be pleased. Taking her at her word, he de-

manded some money, to have the means of going, which she refused. He then took some out of her desk himself, before her eyes, and departed; and she put her maid's flight last week, carrying off some old trinkets, and clothes, to this elopement of Malcolm's; and the two together, make her out a remarkably injured woman."

"But this story only makes it the more imperative, that there should be no duel," said Frank.

"My dear fellow, nonsense! it's due to your mother to have a shot at the old fellow. He has not behaved well by her; but he has not acted so as to forfeit his character as a gentleman."

Over-persuaded, but not convinced, Frank arrived at York, and the first thing they saw, was Mr. Malcolm, calmly imbibing brandy and water in the bar of the hotel.

"There," said Sir John, "you see he is not the thief your mother makes him out to be;

leave matters to me, I will go and settle with him."

According to Sir John's arrangement, matters were so settled, that a duel was to take place in an hour's time, at a certain spot, between Lord Gomer and Mr. Malcolm, the former of whom walked as in a dream, and the latter took—some more brandy and water.

They arrived at the place of meeting, secluded enough in all conscience, behind a very thick wood. Who Mr. Malcolm had obtained for his friend, Lord Gomer had never inquired; but he perceived Mr. Malcolm was sufficiently unsteady in his walk, to show that he had been celebrating his freedom with ample potations.

With a stammering tongue, he declared he must speak to Lord Gomer alone; and though the seconds felt that this was a very unique request in the annals of duelling, on account of his half-besotted state, they granted his request, and retired, Sir John most unwillingly.

"Frank, come here, my dear boy, behind

this tree," said Mr. Malcolm, recovering his senses wonderfully, though still rather thick in speech; "those are two murdering villains, and Sir John the worst of the two. I twigged him, when he began to get up my blood, by telling me all the names you called me. Says I, to myself, you would be glad to see Lord Gomer dead; shot like a dog. I know Frank better than you; I know he would neither use such language, nor raise his hand against an old friend. But I'll tell you what it is, my boy; they are making you and me fight this duel, for their own pleasure. My precious wife, to satisfy her damned pride; and yon scoundrel, for some purpose of his own.

"Now I consented to come out, because I knew they would let you have no peace. But, mark me, Frank! I would sooner put myself into your mother's power again, than raise my hand against you. Have I not lived in your house for eighteen years? eat and drank your food? known you from a little boy?

never had a cross from you all that time? I may be a wretch, a blackguard! I dare say I am; but, bad as I am, I'll never raise my hand against you."

"I thought it was strange, Malcolm, that you should consent to such an arrangement," said Frank.

"It is all those blood-hounds! That West would have worried you and me out of our lives. But he is the devil himself, and he'll suspect something, so let us go through the ceremony; but I was not going to die, and let you think me such a beast. For though I intend firing in the air, do you, Frank, shoot me, if you think well. I have not had so happy a life, as to want to live much longer. And your Nest, your wife, she makes me think I have been a better man since I knew her. Now a word of advice; this business over, cut Sir John, never let him cross your threshold. He is a black-hearted villain; I am not the only

one, that thinks Lady Gomer an angel. Here he comes—Well, Sir John, we are ready."

As Mr. Malcolm took the pistol, he stumbled, and in endeavouring to recover himself, he grasped hold of the branches of the tree. The pistol went off, and passing through Sir John's arm, the ball lodged in Frank's side; he fell heavily, his head striking a root on the ground.

CHAPTER IV.

The notoriety of the duel was ample enough to satisfy even Lady Jane. In a few hours, it spread over Yorkshire, with all the additions such a tale would warrant; and they were marvellous. Mr. Malcolm was in gaol; Sir John in bed; and the agonised Nest was hanging in despair over Frank's insensible form!

After a few days, Yorkshire became aware that neither Lord Gomer, nor Sir John West was dead; that Mr. Malcolm did not fire at both, right and left shots; and that though there was talk of a duel, the whole affair had

been the result of an accident. So Yorkshire became comforted, and proceeded about its usual business and pleasures, much as if nothing had happened.

Nest had received a letter from Mr. Malcolm, dated from the gaol, in which he told her the true state of the case, his sorrow and remorse, his longing for news of Frank, and his pleadings for her forgiveness; and then he would not care how soon he died.

Nest sent it to him, with a line of comfort, ssying, "that the ball was not so likely to injure Frank, if the blow on his head was remedied."

Mr. Malcolm prayed that night heartily. Lady Jane, with frantic gesture, and violent agitation, rushed to the house in which Frank lay, declaring that she, and she only, for whom he had perilled his dear and precious life, should nurse him!

Nest had been told that Frank's safety depended on his nurse, and refused her admittance to his room.

Vehemently she cried and protested, until her voice almost reached the sick-room—

"I will go to him, I must; he calls, I doubt not, for his beloved mother; he wants her, and I am denied admittance. I insist upon it, I demand to be taken to him. Was it not for me he fought and bled?"

How long she would have rhodomontaded in this way, Nest could not tell; but the doctor made his appearance, wondering at the noise.

In vain, he tried to reason with Lady Jane; in vain, he told her of Frank's danger, should anything disturb or shock him. She persisting he was crying, weeping, calling for her, and go to him she would.

"I think," said Dr. M., "you may let her just look at him; it will cure her, perhaps, of the wish to stay. But she must not speak to him." This he said in a whisper to Nest, who leaving the room for a moment, returned with Jervois and Lord Gomer's valet.

Dr. M. now told Lady Jane to follow Nest,

which she did with over-zealous haste and noise; they proceeded to Frank's room, the servants with them.

Pale as the whitest marble, with his head bound up in cloths, saturated with iced water, lay that fine athletic young frame, the victim of his mother's folly.

Not that she thought so, for advancing to the bed, she said, "Frank, I am come to nurse you; I, your mother."

"Nessie! my Nessie!" murmured Frank, his head moving incessantly from side to side.

"Your mother is here, Frank; your grateful mother!" said Lady Jane again.

"Nessie! my Nessie!" again murmured Frank.

Nest stooped down, and placing her cool lips in lingering fondness on his face, whispered in his half-unconscious ear, loving, tender words. A pleased but feeble smile crossed the white face; the bound head ceased its incessant

movement, as if to lose none of the words that were said.

In mercy, the gates of heaven opened, and a ray of softening power reached Lady Jane's heart.

As it expanded, one mighty billow of bitterness, desolation, and remorse swept over her, surging her heart to suffocation.

The doctor caught her, as she staggered, and bearing her away, with the help of the servants, they laid her on a bed.

Her eyes remained fixed, her lips bloodless; and, fearing he knew not what, the doctor bled her. As the reaction took place, a shuddering horror seeming to run through every vein, agitated every nerve. But it was in her usual cold and stately manner that she said,—

"Thank you; I feel better. I should like to be quiet, and alone for a while."

Leaving, unknown to her, a watcher at the door, he complied with her request. But he

was soon recalled by the servant, and bid to listen.

A soul in purgatory could not have breathed sighs more deep and mournful.

"You need watch no longer," said the doctor, respecting in his heart the sacredness of that bitter weeping; "when tears flow, danger is over."

Nevertheless, he returned every half hour, and listened; still she fought with her mental agony, wrestled with the power of truth and virtue; and the good doctor prayed in his heart, "That her sorrow might not be in vain."

CHAPTER IV.

It is indeed true, but few people could have borne the inward hell that Lady Jane had carried so long in her bosom, with such indomitable pride and spirit.

As long as she was keeping up a species of struggle for power with her daughter-in-law, she felt nothing but the determination to conquer. No feelings of right, no power of rectitude, no remorse, no pity, not even ladylike courtesy, or the innate promptings of womanly propriety, stood between her and her determination. She placed all on the cast;

her present happiness, her future weal, and, as we have seen, lost.

When Lady Gomer, with such generous, gentle feeling, said those simple words,—"Pray burn them, they are of no consequence;" who knew more than Lady Jane, the power such letters would give Nest to triumph over her for ever? And how did she requite such high-hearted conduct? By an act so base, so vile, that it left a festering thorn in Lady Jane's side, and by the irritating, never-closing wound, revenged her daughter-in-law amply.

Then the life she had led at Kirkly, hating the place, lovely as it was, and sums expended on it for her sole wish and gratification, that caused poor Frank to be thankful for the increase on his wife's estates;—she hated everything around, about it. Her temper grew so bad, her words so irritable, that Mr. Malcolm, unable to endure such a life, after repeated threats to do so, had at last, as we have seen, left her.

The tale that Sir John West had related about this, was true. He had done nothing else; though, in the heat of her anger and mortification, she insisted, and still did insist, that her maid's desertion was a preconcerted scheme between them.

But all her servants had left, or were leaving. Blind to her own hand's work in their discomfort and unhappiness, with every desertion, she grew only more irritable, more unreasonable. She knew she was obeyed more from fear, than love. She felt her husband cared more for a roof over his head, and food to eat, and that he considered these most dearly bought, at the price of living with her. By degrees, even her neighbours grew chary of visiting a person so proud, so imperious, so sarcastically unchristian in all she said. Her conversation was solely composed of severe remarks, and bitter speeches, with pieces of gossip, that clearly had no higher origin than a servants' hall.

During the time that the golden hours had been dropping essence and happiness in the paths of her children, darker, duller, more solitary, and miserable, had grown the life of Lady Jane.

Her beauty was rapidly disappearing, under the constant pressure of an irritated spirit. The deep line in her forehead seemed stereotyped; the gleam of her eyes made them look large and fierce; the unhealthy flowing of the blood, tinged her skin with a yellow hue, made worse by the additional rouge, that was hoped would remedy the defect. So desolate, so lonely had she become, that she could not call to mind a single thing that loved or cared for her.

With all these thoughts and feelings, there was mixed up remembrances of her son's affection; Mimi's warm-hearted nature, and that gentlest, softest love, which beamed from Nest's heart, through those star-like eyes; that look, which startled Lady Jane even now, by

its depth and fervour, as it had done on that memorable night of her arrival. Here were three mines of love, inexhaustible in riches, and yet she was lonely, desolate, and miserable, and all her own doing. No wonder the bed shook beneath her; no wonder that she groaned aloud.

But, Lady Jane, bless the hour you endured such agony, even though it left your proud, dark head, silvered with its withering power.

Frank slept. With a heart beating under its weight of gratitude, Nest sought where, alone, she could pour out her gratitude to the Giver of such mighty benefits, the Hearer of her agonized prayers.

She stopped on the threshold of the door. Could that be Lady Jane in the chair?

"Is he better? say he is better," said Lady Jane, in a hoarse, but peremptory whisper.

"He sleeps," said Nest, "which is the first best sign."

Lady Jane's lips moved as if to say, "Thank

God!" but no sound came. Nest left the room, and as she departed, a whisper seemed to say in the ear of the stricken woman, "You have almost murdered her husband, do you think she will abide your presence? No, go, lonely and without sympathy, on the path which you have scorched, yourself by withering pride destroying every flower of life that might have sprung there. You may be in grief, but what is yours to hers? Possessing a heart so tender and susceptible, a nature so loving and gracious, she can feel no sympathy with you, who, in a cold, wicked love of self, and pride, have sacrificed so young a life; prostrated that fine, noble form, and he your only son."

Agony and remorse were again wringing Lady Jane's heart, when Nest again entered, bearing some wine and food.

"We have need to strengthen ourselves," she said, simply, "for we may have much to bear."

In silence, Lady Jane took what she gave

her. To have said one word, would have broken down every barrier of coldness, haughtiness, and pride.

Oh! Lady Jane, say that one word; it will be to you the key of the garden of bliss. It will open to you a world you never saw. You are on the confines of happiness; miss the turning, and you may sink into the bottomless pit of impenitence and wrath.

Nest again left the room; but Lady Jane felt she was cared for, as, ere long, some servants entered, a fire was lit, her own attendant appeared with her wardrobe for the night; and though she mechanically went through the usual routine for retiring, her mind ran to and fro amid the conflicting emotions that she now felt for the first time, plainly by their violence, indicating she should have no rest.

Above all her emotions and thoughts, this one idea intruded itself. "How unobtrusive, how thoughtful, how delicate in her manner to me. Shall I give way? Shall I tell her

how desolate I feel? But she will triumph, she will mock me, perhaps. It will be too much for her to refrain from exulting, and then I shall be mad. I shall indeed expire with indignation. No, I will remain here, though to see him again, I cannot, I cannot; but I will not return to Kirkly. I will not see him, but I will stay in this house. I shall hear of him, and I shall see her; yes, it seems good to me, to look at her; I find comfort in her eyes."

CHAPTER V.

FRANK recovered slowly.

"Now," said the good doctor, "you must take Lord Gomer to the sea-side, to gain strength. I can do no more for him. If he is to recover from the effects of the blow, you, through God's mercy, will be his best physician. He wants care, extreme, watchful care, and no excitement of even the smallest kind. In fact, I would never speak to him, or suffer any one to do so, until he first opens a subject himself. His nervous system is in that state, that even to broach a new idea, might so

startle him, and cause him to *think*, that it would undo the care of weeks. You have no light task before you, Lady Gomer, and were you other than you are, I should hesitate to tell you as much as I now do, and that is, a month will not see your cares ended; no, nor six months. In fact, it may be years, before Lord Gomer becomes what he was a month ago."

Nest bowed her head in mute submission. The conversation she had held with her grandmother, when sitting a young unmarried girl at her feet, was ringing in her ears.

"You can die but once, granny. I would live to endure for him."

Her words seemed prophetic. But she quailed not, shrank not.

"I can endure," she felt, "for him, and with God's help, I will."

Lady Jane had remained all this time at the hotel to which Frank had been taken, though she never saw him.

Her better nature was struggling within her; with strange inconsistency, she would receive her daughter-in-law's visit, in her usual cold, indifferent manner, though she flushed with eagerness, when she heard her approaching, and bent her head, as she left, to catch the last sound of her footsteps.

In spite of Nest's deep-burning anxiety, she, in some measure, defined Lady Jane's present condition, and with intuitive delicacy, never, by word or deed, showed her perception of it. She knew that in a heart so dead to all but pride, did she but wound that pride in the smallest part, it would close, and perhaps remain dead for ever.

Therefore, only by small delicate attentions, such as Lady Jane felt no servant would remember for her, only by little daily acts, that made Lady Jane feel were meant for her individually, and yet could emanate but from a thoughtful, generous heart, did Nest work silently on that cold, ungenial soil.

And a little bud began to grow in it. Lady Jane never entered her sitting-room, without glancing with nervous fear to a table, on which was placed a small bouquet of roses. She never clasped it to her heart, fastening it safe, without feeling what a pang it would have given her, had it not been there.

She never felt the clock strike eleven, without sitting in nervous agitation, for the expected message—"Lady Gomer's compliments, and would be happy to wait on Lady Jane, if convenient."

The cold message, "Lady Jane will see Lady Gomer," was necessary to veil the eager longing, the ardent desire.

And though cold and formal was the reception, the ear drank in the soft words, the eyes lingered over every feature of that pale, worn, but still most lovely face, and a blank want filled that proud heart, when the brief interview was over.

But in one thing they differed seriously.

Almost the first coherent sentence that Frank uttered, was in Mr. Malcolm's vindication. Nest, fully appreciating the generous feeling that prompted Frank's thoughts and words in that direction, thinking that probably his best physic might be ease of heart about him, exerted herself to the utmost, in obtaining his release. She sent to the magistrates, she spoke to them herself; though access to Lord Gomer was, of course, denied, she gave every satisfaction she could, as to his innocence, and finally succeeded in obtaining what she wished, by becoming bail for his future appearance, should it be necessary. In all this, Lady Jane showed herself very much the Lady Jane of old.

"Let me see him die there!" she said; "it will be but a fitting punishment for him."

"Was he the first to blame?" said Lady Gomer.

Lady Jane shrank from her looks and words. Nevertheless, it was quite out of her nature,

forgiving Mr. Malcolm; and she used her influence as strongly to criminate him, as her daughter-in-law did to release him.

"Can I pray for Frank's recovery, allowing such a piece of injustice to exist?" said Nest, with impetuosity.

"I am quite at a loss to understand your feelings," said Lady Jane; "it seems strange to me, that apparently so devoted a wife, should give herself such unnecessary trouble to assist the almost-murderer of her husband!"

"I could not nurse Frank so well, or listen to his words, or look into his eyes, and not be able to answer his constant demands about Mr. Malcolm, so as to ease his heart," returned Nest.

"You should reason with Frank; you ought to tell him, that such a monster cannot be permitted to go about the world, because he is romantically generous."

"There is a monster going about the world loose, but it is not Mr. Malcolm; and there *is*

a mother, who would have sacrificed her son's life, and she, I think, is worse than Mr. Malcolm!"

"You allude to me, Lady Gomer?"

"Yes, and Sir John West; but I would not so have done, if you would but be reasonable."

Lady Jane was some days ere she recovered this fracas with Nest.

In the meantime, there were plenty of kind friends to inform Mr. Malcolm of all that passed; and while his wife's conduct but increased his bitterness towards her, the kindness of Lord and Lady Gomer soothed and restored him.

He wrote a long and verbose letter of thanks to Nest, declaring, among many protestations of gratitude, "that to her, he should owe the wish to become a new creature. That he had it happily in his power, to do her a piece of service, and that he should devote his life to it, as long as necessary. He hinted darkly about unseen dangers, and unprincipled villains

crossing her path; but she was not to concern herself, he would provide for the hour of need. He was sure she would be glad to hear, that owing to the notoriety of the duel, a person had discovered him, who had been on the look-out for him, for some time. This person disclosed to him the pleasing fact, that he was heir to a small estate of three or four hundred a-year, left him by a distant relation."

"Thus," he continued, "I have got the means of living a respectable life, and I thank God for it. I would rather have rotted in gaol, than be indebted for anything to that —— proud woman. But for thinking of poor Frank and you, I have enjoyed being in the gaol, for I felt pretty sure I should never see her there. I am going off to my estate to-day; but wherever I may be, I consider myself your servant and slave! any command from you I will obey. And I will say but one thing still, which I know will please you more than all I have said, I will try to be a better man; I will try to de-

serve your kind notice; I have something to live for, and need no longer lead a devil's life! &c. &c. &c." The letter was very long.

Nest returned a kind answer, congratulating him, also commending his wise resolutions, and hoping he would soon have a better motive than merely pleasing her, &c. &c.

"Ah!" said he, as he read that, "I could have sworn that's just what she would have said. Better motive, indeed! but, however, I am a bad, irreligious man. I know, nevertheless, I feel so light-hearted, now that Frank is better, and that I have taken these good resolves, that I'll wait a year, to see if my opinions change, and if it is possible to have a better motive than serving such a lovely angel as she is."

Nest made all the preparations for the journey, which were necessary, and settled that the little grandmother, little Franz, and Mimi, should follow them in a week's time. Lady Jane was aware of all these prepara-

tions, but made no remark; yet Nest could see how troubled was her eye, how trembling and nervous she had become, and her manner was more tender and familiar.

"Will you see Frank before we leave?" she said, on the eve of her departure.

"No," said Lady Jane, with a shudder.

"But you would like to hear about him?"

"Yes, yes, you must write to me."

"I will not fail to do so," said Nest, quietly, though inwardly her heart rejoiced. She did not wish the ties that had lately sprung up between them to be severed at once.

"Perhaps, when you are stronger and can bear to see Frank, you will join us at Coadmore?" continued Nest.

"I will think about it," said the cold mother-in-law; but inwardly she was pleased, and continued, "You must direct to me in London. I am going to visit my sister, the Princess."

"I am very glad of it," said Nest, joyfully; "for I could not think, with any pleasure, of your returning alone to Kirkly. You have taken the last weight off my mind."

The cold heart was touched.

"My dear, you are kind, you seem to think of everybody. I should not wish to be quite forgotten." These words seemed forced out irresistibly.

"Oh! no, not forgotten, I am sure," said Nest, with a cheerful voice. "You shall be the judge, yourself, of that, and punish us, if we deserve it. But I must say farewell, for we are to travel so slowly, that we are to begin early in the morning, and go no further after twelve o'clock."

"You are in a hurry, indeed you are; take tea with me this evening. I may have something to say about Frank, some directions, orders—" Lady Jane hesitated.

"If Frank can spare me, I will come," said Nest, rising and leaving the room. She pitied

the Lady Jane, for the struggle she was enduring, between pride and natural affections.

"Is it possible that I like her? love her, the Lady Gomer? Frank's wife? that I would keep her near me, about me; that I feel calm and happy when I look at her; dull and irritable when she is away?"

Lady Jane asked herself these questions until tea-time, unable to answer them. Then Nest appeared, pale and wan, for she had had a very fatiguing day, though little did Lady Jane know from what cause.

"Frank is asleep," she said, "and if it will not be too long, I can remain half an hour."

"Not at all, not at all," said Lady Jane, with alacrity. "Pray use this chair, my dear," and she placed Nest in it, watching with great satisfaction the pleased and comfortable air with which she reclined in it. Perhaps never before, had Nest abandoned herself to such quiet, listless ease, before Lady Jane, as she

did now. She was so weary, and tired, that it was only by gentle smiles, she acknowledged her attentions; she was too tired to speak.

Lady Jane waited on her, handed her a cup of tea, and grew quite fussy with her attentions, while she answered one of her own questions, by saying to herself,—"I think no one can help liking and admiring such a lovely creature. How gracefully she lies in her chair; what beautiful feet and hands she has, and that little black lace hood over her head, makes her face look like an innocent child's. I am glad her hair has grown so long; that rich curl has fallen down by accident. What eye-lashes! I always thought her a pretty creature, but she is more. I don't see a fault in her face and figure. I think really, on inspection, she seems perfectly beautiful. I cease to wonder at Frank's infatuation; she looks so young and girlish, quite a child, and yet I know she is no child."

This last thought was not so comfortable; a frown appeared on Lady Jane's brow.

"I am sorry to give so much trouble," said Nest, "but really I am tired."

"You have been fatiguing yourself, preparing for your journey. Why do you not make your servants exert themselves?" said Lady Jane.

"No, it is not preparing, but sometimes we cannot keep Frank quiet."

"How, my dear? I don't understand you."

"The blow on his head has affected the brain, and sometimes, poor fellow! he cannot rest."

"Why don't you leave him to the nurse and the doctor? it is quite ridiculous his expecting you to exhaust yourself in this way."

Nest shook her head.

"He is my husband, my own Frank; it is my duty, as well as my pleasure, to attend to him."

Lady Jane looked at her, while many thoughts ran through her brain, one more new to it than another.

A knock at the door brought Seaworth, saying, "Lord Gomer was awake, and wanted Lady Gomer immediately."

Nest sprung to her feet. "Say I will come directly."

"Good bye! madam, good bye! and thank you for your care of me," she said to Lady Jane.

"Don't go, don't go in such a hurry; I have a great many things to say to you, my dear child," hurriedly said Lady Jane.

"It is so bad for him to be kept waiting, he gets excited; can you not write all to me?" And Nest raised Lady Jane's hand, in much the same way as when they first met, and kissed it.

The look, the act, brought all back to Lady Jane's mind; the resemblance to a fair young angel, the beaming affection in the eyes, the graceful, beseeching attitude.

"God bless you, my dear child! and thank you, thank you for all you have done, and been to me." She placed a hand on the lovely, drooping head, and drawing it down, kissed her on the forehead, her first kiss.

"Now go, if you must; and don't forget your mother. Don't call me madam any more."

"No, mamma," said Nest, with a sweet smile, and, as the door shut, Lady Jane said,—

"How softly she says it; I feel happier now that I have heard that word again from her lips."

CHAPTER VI.

Few knew, but the doctor and the nurse, what Nest had really to undergo.

Some nerve in the brain had been injured, so as to utterly confuse Frank's mind and words. Sometimes the irritability and discomfort were so great, that words are wanting to describe the pain and anguish poor Frank not only endured himself, but inflicted on all around him.

To reason with him was impossible; he was unable to comprehend it.

It was at these times that the devoted nature of Nest's character shone out. Her love,

her firmness, her endurance, her patience, were all tried to the utmost, and seemed but to grow stronger, with the exercise given them. To the doctor and nurse, she seemed the ministering angel, promised to those who needed it; and as the former often said, "Lord Gomer will owe his life and reason, solely to his wife's care."

The journey was a lingering, painful one, and Nest rejoiced when the week's end found her settled in a regular routine of life, that seemed to agree with Frank, and also at the near prospect of seeing her darling boy, her dear Mimi, and little grandmother.

Mr. Llewellyn had given Nest a very extraordinary account of Mr. Leonard. He had applied himself with such energy and talent to his business, had shewn such aptitude and quickness in comprehending it, had devoted such hours and industry to improving it, that he bade fair to become a very clever and learned man, and to rise to be a great one, by his inventions and improvements.

In all this Nest rejoiced, and promised herself some refreshment for all her toil and troubles by making Mimi happy. And when the young man rode over, by request, to pay his respects to her, she could not but admire the improvement that had taken place in his personal appearance. Handsome as he was before, he had grown fuller, larger, stronger. There was happiness and content in his eyes, a fine manly bearing in his actions; and while the same impetuous, ardent gratitude characterized his meeting with Nest, the utmost deference to her was mingled with self-respect and confidence.

"He is an extraordinary young man, I will allow," said Nest; "otherwise how could one bear to think of my dear Mimi's fate, throwing herself away in a fit of passion. I trust he may rise to be a great man; he has a noble forehead, and his eyes beam fine, noble ideas; clever, talented, energetic, yes, I think with Llewellyn, he must rise to be a great man."

The meeting between Nest and the travellers,

who arrived about this time, was painful to all but little Franz, who testified uproarious satisfaction at the sight of his mother.

But when they saw Frank, their dear, their beloved Frank, so changed, so broken down, such a miserable wreck of what he once was, the dear little grandmother received such a shock, that, alarmed and frightened, Nest led her from the room. She had to be placed in bed, almost unconscious; and when she rose once more, at the end of a week, her bright little spirit was quenched, the shadow of death seemed to have passed over her eyes, the little old grandmother's heart appeared broken.

Mimi, for Nest's sake, bore up as well as she could, and learnt many a lesson of endurance and patience, while she tried to assist Nest, and lighten her painful labours. The shutting of a door suddenly, a word spoken too loud, the rustling of a silk dress, the clatter of knives and forks, everything of that sort seemed to give

Frank spasms of agony, which made him burst into uncontrollable passions.

Once, when toddling round the room, little Franz, in his exuberance of happiness, ran against the sofa on which his father was reclining. Startled and irritated, as it seemed, almost to madness, Frank snatched up the child, and looked as if preparing to dash it to the ground.

"Frank," said Nest gently, though her heart seemed to stop beating; "they have taken my baby from me. Will you give me my baby?"

The low, mournful voice, the sad recollection of all she had once suffered, instantly came to his shattered mind. Kissing the boy passionately, he laid him gently on his mother's knee, and then, like a wilful, tired child, wept bitterly. These floods of tears always did him good; but as his health grew stronger, and his appearance almost as healthy and noble as it was before, a strange fear would run through Nest's heart.

"I said I would endure, I would live to endure for him," she daily said to herself.

Of all the people that came near him, none delighted Frank so much as his grandmother. He would sit quiet for an hour, looking at her, and holding her hand. "You love Frank," he would say, every now and then, "your second Frank."

"Yes," said the little, quiet, faded grandmother, "I love Frank, my second Frank. I love him better than all the world."

"Mimi," said Nest, one day, "I must thank you for all you do to save and help me, but more than all, for your unselfish, loving conduct. My Mimi, next to God, you are my best stay. Nevertheless, you must not be forgotten. Now that we have a little peace, I must think of you and Hugh. Hear now all I have to say about him, my darling, patient, forbearing sister."

Mimi listened with downcast eyes, but glowing cheeks—with modest humility, but delighted, beating heart—as Nest told her all, not forgetting even his fine, handsome appearance. "And now," said Nest, in conclusion, "something must

be settled. I must take a good favourable time with Frank—"

"No, Nest, no; while Frank is as he is now, I cannot think of happiness. While you are taxed, mind and body, so much more than they ought to be, I shall remain to help you. Hugh would not be deserving of my love, did he wish it, under present circumstances. I should not feel," she continued, smiling, "worthy the affection of such a grand personage as you have just been describing to me, did I desert my duties in this way. No, Nest, no, wait a happier time. I won't deny that I love Hugh a great deal more than ever I cared to own. I always have felt, even when my mother talked about our dear Elmore, that I never could or would have married him. For, Nessie, I have some of the family pride, and I could have married no one who despised me; and what would Elmore, what would a modern man of the present day, have said to a wife, who can barely read or write, who is more ignorant than a girl of twelve?"

"He would have discovered that she was the dearest, most generous-hearted girl in the world."

"That would not have suited me. I should have been wicked, had I been despised. Now with Hugh it is different. He knows all my failings, he knows that I owe to him all that I can muster up in the way of learning; and all my goodness I owe to you. But, Nest, I should like to see him, just once."

"You shall, dear."

"Thanks, thanks, but you must be present. I ought to be very grateful to God, that I can look forward with so much happiness to the future, spite of my mother's prognostications. It is through no act of hers, that I am the only one of her three children, who seem to come unscathed through the fire of her anger. Not that marrying a page would appear an escape, in the eyes of the world. But Seaworth tells me my mother has altered, and has become fond of you! Can that really be true, Nessie?"

"I trust her heart is changing, Mimi."

"Well! you alone can do it, Nest. But perhaps she is feeling the force of the old proverb, 'Curses, like chickens, come home to roost.' The sight of Frank must have touched even her iron heart."

"She only saw him once, she could not bear it."

"I am glad she showed even so much feeling as that. But, Nest, our Frank—"

"My Mimi, yes," said Nest, her head drooping.

"Is he always to be like this?" said Mimi.

"I hope not; with great care, Dr. M. said, in a year or two's time—"

"What! have you to endure this life so long as that, my Nest, my poor Nessie?"

"Even then, with all my care, recovery was doubtful."

"Oh, mamma, cruel, remorseless mother!" said Mimi, with irresistible emotion, "Augusta is lost, I am only just saved, and Frank, your

only son, Frank, your handsome, noble, generous son, is to have a man's frame, and a child's heart; and all this your doing. God forgive you, mother! God forgive you! Who else can?"

For once Nest gave way; violent hysterics, followed by severe fainting fits, alarmed the whole house, and showed the force of the mental and bodily sufferings she had lately endured.

Mimi might have deprecated her share in causing this attack, and in the premature appearance of Nest's second child. But she found it was matter for thankfulness that the little bud was untimely nipped. Had it come to full maturity, there might have been some grounds for fearing, that this time of trouble and untold grief would have blighted its future existence.

During the time of Nest's illness up-stairs, the dear little grandmother had in some measure recovered her health and spirits, attending upon Frank. At first, he was wholly unmanageable; but in her child-like, simple way, she made him understand that his Nest's life depended on his

quiet, watchful care, and she ruled him thus with a thread of silk.

Though indifferent and lost to things about him, Frank retained vivid recollections of the past; and all the little reason he could muster together, was now devoted to acting as he had acted after Nest's severe illness a year and a half ago. And when she was brought down stairs, and laid on his couch beside him, though childish tears of pleasure ran down his face, Nest perceived, with irrepressible joy, that he was more calm, collected, and rational, than he had been since the fatal accident.

It proved no fallacy. The gentle little grandmother, with her simple, child-like heart, was performing a miracle; and in the exquisite happiness this occasioned her, the blue eyes again shone with subdued radiance, the little faded cheek bloomed faintly, the wrinkles disappeared.

The improvement was slow, but certain. And in the thankfulness of her heart, Nest roamed along the sea-shore, taking a last view of her

beloved scenes, for Frank was sufficiently recovered to be taken home.

Mimi was riding with one of the handsomest, most gallant-looking youths ever seen, and seemed remarkably happy thereat.

CHAPTER VII.

NEST stood in the little cave, from whence she had first seen Frank. Her foot poised on a stone, her hat in one hand, the other on the rock, her face lifted up, her eyes inspired, it needed but a radiant light to think her on her way to heaven.

The dark cloud of grief and apprehension was passing from her. No wonder her countenance was joyous, her form springing with happiness. The sound of the sea was that of quiet, murmuring praise; the little waves rippled over with joy, the deep green billows heaved with gentle

love towards the deep, silent caverns, as if anxious to lose themselves in their dark coolness. A butterfly, beguiled by the solemn calm, fluttered out of the gaudy sunshine into the grand old caverns, and seemed to pause, on wonder-stricken wing, at the vast, mysterious gloom into which she had strayed.

Another eye than Nest's noted all this. Another step than her's was lingering on the spot.

But it was an evil eye, a loathsome step, though they also recalled the first view of that cavern.

"Nest!" said a voice close to her.

She started, and turning, beheld Sir John West.

"I have been waiting here to speak to you for some time," he said, his glittering eyes taking in with greedy look the beauty of her face and form. But while the freedom of his look sent the mantling blood to her cheek, he saw no quailing in her eye, no alarm in her countenance. The simple, quiet composure of her manner,

almost made him think she was again about to say, with gentle grace, "I am Miss Herbert, of Coadmore."

"What do you wish to say?" were the words that came.

"How is Frank?" he said, half stammering. The depraved, bold, bad man of the world was abashed before that fair girl.

"He is better."

"I have been here, Nest, for some weeks," he continued; "I heard you were ill."

"I have given you no leave to call me by that name. To you I am Lady Gomer," she said, haughtily.

"Beautiful, matchless creature! I will call you anything; I am beside myself. Oh! Nest, if I should say anything to make you hate me, you only are to blame for it. I am mad; I have been mad. I will commit any act of insanity, so that you but looked at me, so that you would speak but one kind word to me."

Nest looked round as, with mad passion in

his eyes and gestures, he knelt at her feet, and clasped her dress to his lips.

They were alone in the caverns. Some dozen feet below them heaved the ever-moving sea, showing the depth by its deep green colour.

Though her cheek might get a little paler, her eyes shone with clear, determined energy. "Rise, Sir John, rise. Have some respect for yourself, if you have none for me."

"I have but one feeling in my heart, one burning passion in my brain," he exclaimed. "They rose in this very place, and have burnt themselves into every part of my being. The very fact of your guileless nature so immediately discovering the difference between Frank and myself, at our first meeting, only made them deeper. Though I was engaged to be married, I only suffered that marriage to take place, that I might be nearer you. I watched every word, every thought, every action, to discover a flaw on this matchless piece of work. I only disco-

vered more to be loved and worshipped, until now I love and worship you with an intensity, a fervour, a madness, that nothing can quench, nothing satiate. But a few months ago, I limited my ambition to one smile. Now I must have all. I never controlled my mad wishes. Now they have taken possession of me. Nest, do you hear? Give me an answer at once. I am rid of my wife; our divorce is nearly past. Your husband is dying; a slow, lingering death, it may be, but he will never recover; remember my words. Now answer, promise, should you ever be free, promise to be mine, and I will wait, wait, like a patient beaten spaniel, under your feet; wait, like the humblest slave; wait, like a very dog. And oh! Nest, think what you will do: save a soul, a soul so smothered and pent up in crime, that angels cease to visit it, and regard it as a dreadful, loathsome thing. Make but this promise, and no pilgrim shall be more devout, no proselyte more sincere. Make but this promise, make it, and save me."

In the midst of all her horror and disgust, the pitying heart of Nest was touched, at the dreadful state of this man's soul.

"May God help you, Sir John, to become a better man."

He saw the pity that beamed in her eye. He sprang to his feet, and would have clasped her in his arms; but she as quickly fled to a little tottering ledge, and, burning with indignation at his wilful misconstruction of her pity, cried, "Never! never!"

He flung himself with rage against the rocks—he tore up pieces, as if to hurl at her—he blasphemed, until her ears ached with horror.

He could not reach her, and she could not leave her place of refuge without returning to him.

Bitterly did she repent placing herself where she was exposed to the pitiless storm of his mad rage, the disgrace of his love and infatuation; and she looked down, to see if the friendly waves could not receive her, and shut her out, in their

pure green waters, from such polluted sounds and looks. He saw the look, and understood it.

"What! beautiful, cold statue, do you prefer lying dead and drowned at the bottom of those caverns, to being with me, to hearing me speak? Then you shall have your wish; you shall drown, but not alone. You will not live with me, you shall die with me. One more chance I give you. Promise."

"Never! never!" exclaimed Nest, with fervour.

"Then die—"

"Not so fast, Sir John," said Mr. Malcolm; "if I had been more used to climbing, Lady Gomer should not have had this fright. Here! take him away," (turning to some men); "and now, Lady Gomer, take my hand. I hope you are not much alarmed. The moment I saw you coming down alone, I knew there would be a row, and as I am not so young as I was, I went for help. I did not like to tell your people what about, or they would skin Sir John. Very steady! well done—you are as light of foot as a

fawn, and not a bit frightened by that fellow. Certainly, there is no one like you. Now! no thanks, for this is my duty. Sir John watches you, I watch him. I know his ways, he is astonishingly wicked. But set your heart at rest now, for I am going to have him outlawed; he borrowed money of me to get his divorce bill through; and I lent it to him, just to get this power over him. In another week he'll be abroad, or in prison. It's the only way I could think of, for he is such a devil."

All this, Mr. Malcolm uttered by fits and starts, as he followed Nest up the hill; and he took leave of her at the top, especially delighted with her thanks, and most especially pleased with his own doings.

Nest said nothing of her adventure, and they returned to Gomer.

CHAPTER VIII.

NEST had written constantly to Lady Jane, according to her promise; and though she received in return but cold and stately replies, studiously avoiding anything like affection, Nest would not suffer the correspondence to cease on that account.

Mimi was immoveable, in having nothing settled about her marriage, until Frank was sufficiently well to be consulted about it. And Hugh looked, in her eyes, as the prince of pages, and in Nest's as a paragon of young men, when he declared the restoration of Lord Gomer should

alone be the dawn of happiness to him. A great deal was to be done on arriving at Gomer; and while the dear grandmother took charge of Frank, Mimi and Nest visited every haunt, every cottage, every work, plan, and place, that they thought Frank would like to see completed.

Their rose-garden was a paradise of sweet loveliness; Maggie the happiest of poultry women.

"In fact," said Mimi, "if Frank would but get well faster, and Elmore would only come home, we should want for nothing."

In putting away many things, such as papers, &c., they found a letter addressed, in Frank's hand-writing, to the Duke. Rightly conjecturing, it was written just before the duel, or rather intended one; they solemnly put it away in a secret drawer.

Dr. M. was greatly pleased and elated, by the improvement in Lord Gomer.

"Be careful," he said, "to give him no

shock, and not to thwart him. In a year or two, we may hope great things."

Was it to be really a year or two, before she could hope to have her own Frank again? Was it to be that weary time, that she was to consider him only a spoilt, petted child—to have no companion for her heart, no friend for her soul?

"I will live to endure it," was all she could say.

About this time, came a communication that Lady Jane was at Kirkly, and would come to Gomer to see her son, when convenient to him.

Mimi and Nest both felt a little shock at this announcement; but Frank and Lady Gomer received it with great indifference. In fact, Nest would have been glad had he shown anything like feeling on the subject. His indifference afflicted her, for his own sake. The little grandmother only felt through him.

"Would you like, my Frank," said Nest, "your mother to stay here a few days?"

"Oh, yes," said Frank.

"It won't annoy you, darling?"

"She won't hurt me, will she, Nessie? you will be by."

"Yes, dear."

"Then let her come, if she wishes it, she need not trouble granny or me; of course, we will have our backgammon as usual." And he laughed heartily, a laugh that always wrung Nest's soul.

"Shall I ask her, Mimi, to stay? It seems unnatural not to do so; yet I feel a strange reluctance about it."

"If she has the least common sense in her, she will not wish to remain," said Mimi.

"But twenty miles is a considerable way to pay merely a visit."

"Tell her, both I and granny are here. I should think that news will prevent her coming altogether."

But it did not; moreover she came prepared to stay, for one night, at least. Nest, in kind-

ness to her, met her alone. Though hardly changed in manner, Lady Jane kissed her when they met, and while she put on an indifferent mood, Nest perceived she was inwardly agitated.

This increased, as Nest led her to her own rooms, which remained as she had left them, untouched, unchanged.

"When you have rested, mamma," said Nest, "we will go and seek Frank, who is in the rose-garden with granny. But you must have some refreshment after your long drive."

While Lady Jane could hardly understand the magnanimity of Nest's conduct to her, she yet felt she would not be Nest, if she had acted otherwise.

She sat in her wonted chair. She recalled that one scene. Her soul grew dark with the remembrance of it; but she stifled her feelings. If she had come back to Gomer with any idea of regaining her authority; if she had made up her mind to make one more effort to reign

there; if, disgusted with the loneliness of Kirkly and her hatred of the place, she had suffered evil thoughts again to enter her bosom, it was not now, this first day, that she would show them; and it was not in her former manner that she would attempt success.

She remembered her son's gentle, generous disposition, his horror at causing grief to any one; and she hoped many things, from the fact of his recovery, the wish he always had to oblige her. Once her pride was satisfied, and her place restored, they should then see she had affections, they should then witness her love, her admiration of her daughter-in-law. But never would she unlock her heart of pride, never could she give way, until she was once more restored to her place at Gomer. These thoughts occupied her on the road there. The sight of her noble, beautiful rooms, may have stifled her good motives, and encouraged her bad ones. Be that as it may, she shortly descended to the drawing-room, with a little idea

in her heart, that she would appeal to Frank's feelings that very day. Nest had certainly hinted in her letters, that though his bodily health was perfectly restored, the blow on his head yet affected it. But that would only cause him to be more gentle and amenable to her wishes. Yes, she resolved she would make the trial, one last effort; and in this determination she opened the drawing-room door, and entered that room in which she had so often played the queen, with her usual haughty demeanour.

CHAPTER IX.

Frank was lying on a sofa, playing with Nest's long curls, as she knelt beside him. He had been rather wilful that morning, and she was coaxing him into a better mood. Perhaps, though he said nothing about it, the perception that his mother was near, agitated him in some little degree. Perhaps he was hardly conscious himself of the influence she yet had over him. He was laughing heartily, as his mother entered; but the sound struck upon her ear, as painfully mocking.

"Here is mamma," said Nest, hurriedly; "speak to her, Frank."

"How do you do, mamma?" said Frank, laughing again.

Lady Jane stopped in the middle of the room, as if shocked.

"Frank, my dear Frank!" she then began.

"Her Frank! she says, her Frank! We know better, don't we, Nessie? Tell her so."

"Your mother is very kind, dearest; she does not mean, so much to call you hers, as to show she loves you."

"Does she love me? I think not. I think she wished to kill me, did she not, Nessie?"

"No, no, my Frank; how naughty you are to say so. She is your mother, and has come to see you. Call her, and ask her to come and sit by you, and then you will see that she loves you."

"I think not, Nessie; I think she will be my death, as she was my father's."

"Hush, hush, darling! you are too naughty

this morning. You will make your mother weep."

"No, no, that I won't; come, mamma, come and sit by me, but don't send my Nest away, for, mother, I am not what I was. I am weak, weak in the head, and Nest is my head, my heart, my life!"

"Now, Frank, I will take your mother away, if you get excited."

"I won't, I will be quiet. I am glad to see you, mother. Have you been out driving? Stop, Nest, that is wrong, I know. Have you been away for long, mother? I don't remember to have seen you lately."

Suddenly he broke into a fit of childish laughter, and turning to Nest, he buried his face in her shoulder, whispering and laughing, "She paints, Nessie; how odd, her face is painted!"

Wave upon wave, billow upon billow, of agony, horror, remorse and misery, broke over Lady Jane's heart.

"Nest, Nest, you never told me this!" burst from her lips, white with internal agony.

"Mamma, I thought you knew; how could I tell you more?"

Groans burst from the miserable woman; she sunk on the floor, as if powerless and death-stricken.

"Frank," said Nest, fearing every thing for him, in this exciting scene, "let us go and seek granny, and then I will bring mamma some wine."

"Is she ill, Nessie?"

"Yes, dear."

"Poor mamma! but how odd of her to paint. I cannot help laughing, Nessie;" and as the door shut on them, that mocking, foolish laugh rang in Lady Jane's ears.

The lofty room echoed with her stifled cries. She clutched the carpet with her frenzied hands; she called upon God to kill her; her misery was too great to bear; and into what a state of

madness she might not have driven herself, could hardly be realized.

Suddenly she felt cool hands laid on her burning brow, her streaming hair was collected, and put back; she was gently raised, and some cordial administered. As she lifted her eyes with difficulty and pain, they did not bring to her view the angel face of Nest, for which she had sought, as a panacea to her misery.

It was a lovely, fair face, with pitying eyes of clearest blue, shining through tears. The fairest, whitest skin suffered the clear blood to meander so healthfully, that the bloom on her cheeks was like a peach, paling only as you looked at the dewy, rosy lips.

Heavy curls of rich golden hair fell in glistening rings from her cheek to her waist, tinting the bright complexion more vividly with their halo.

"Mamma, dear mamma! are you better?" said Mimi. "Nest is so grieved, she sent me, dear mamma, to you, because she was afraid for

you, and she cannot leave Frank, for a few minutes; but, mamma, if you wish it, I will go away. I will not stay, if you cannot love your Mimi."

"Love my Mimi!" unconsciously seemed to break from Lady Jane's lips; "my Mimi!"

"Yes, dear mamma, your daughter, your child; will you not kiss me, mamma, and forgive me for any thing I did to trouble you?"

"Forgive you?" again repeated Lady Jane, in the same abstracted manner.

"Oh, Nest! I am so glad you are come. I am so afraid dear mamma is ill. She looks so wild, but she is not unkind to me."

They raised her between them, and placed her on a chair.

Nest poured forth her sorrow, that she should have been thus tried, through her ignorance of Frank's real state; while Mimi kissed her hands, and said,—"Dear mamma, love your Mimi, your poor child!"

In one unceasing flow the tears rained from

Lady Jane's eyes; at last, she turned to Mimi. "Have I yet a child? is this really my Mimi?" and circling her with her arms, she kissed her fondly and often. Nest rose to suffer the sacred feelings of nature to relieve themselves between this long-estranged mother and daughter alone. But Lady Jane quickly turned, and said,—"My children!"

They bent over her in fond affection, they soothed her with loving words, they kissed her with soft, gentle kisses.

Lady Jane received almost all their affectionate attentions in silence; but it was from intense feeling. She hardly breathed, lest she should miss their words; she would not move, lest the soft kisses should escape her. She was loved, she was cared for. For the first time in her life, she felt the gush of exquisite affection.

"Now, mamma," said Mimi, "I am your nurse, go and lie down for an hour. I will set by you, and watch that the flies don't teaze you."

"What a lovely girl you have grown, Mimi!"

"Am I?" said Mimi, blushing; "that is because I am happy. Take care, mamma, that I don't rival you soon, if you make me too happy."

CHAPTER X.

Frank was much more rational in the evening, though he winced, and half put out his hand to motion his mother away, if she advanced too near him.

He was playing backgammon with his little granny, on a quilted board, with softly-lined boxes, that no noise might excite his susceptible nerves.

The old Lady Gomer took no notice of Lady Jane in any way; in fact, her eyes, thoughts, and words, were wholly engrossed by Frank at all times.

Nest sat close by, Frank sometimes clasping her waist, sometimes her hand, sometimes her dress, appealing to her at all times; and if he got vexed with his throws, turning his forehead to her, that she might kiss it, and smooth the hair away from its broad expanse.

Lady Jane lived a lifetime of thought, as she watched this group. And the result of some were, she would begin one act of penitence that night. At nine, Frank went to bed, and the little grandmother was about to follow him, when Lady Jane, with flushed cheek, spoke to her.

To everything excepting what regarded her grandson, the little Lady Gomer had become very obtuse. Her former love and admiration of Nest had utterly vanished. She spoke now and then to Mimi, but in general she uttered no words, but what were addressed to Frank; she never moved, but for something he might want.

It was, therefore, not until Lady Jane had re-

peated her sentence more than once, that old Lady Gomer seemed to catch the sense of it.

"An apology! making me an apology? Lady Jane it looks like, but that is impossible. I am a Christian; I have long ago forgiven her, I bear her no malice. I don't want apologies, I cannot speak to her, I said I never would, when my first Frank died, and now my second Frank, poor fellow! poor boy! he and his old granny are childish together. Such a fine young man, so frank, so brave, so generous. Am I so very wicked, that I am thus to be punished? Am I such a sinner, that my heart is to be broken? And I thought she would save him, but she did not; she deceived me, she disappointed me. I am an old woman, an old, miserable woman; I want no apologies—I am very wicked myself."

The hopeless misery with which the dear little grandmother spoke, cut Lady Jane to the heart. She could not speak; and as she tried to grasp her dress, to detain her, until she

could, she fell with some violence against a large carved oak screen. This again, in its turn, upset a table on which had been placed the large camphine lamp, with its green shade, that was always used for Frank. Far and wide over the room the lighted spirit fled, and before Mimi had assisted her mother to rise, it was on fire in several places.

"Make no noise, for fear of Frank," said the ever-watchful wife. "Come, granny, come out while I call the servants."

Placing her grandmother in safety, Nest returned with help. The greedy flame was running up the flowing folds of muslin, that formed part of the curtains, and was licking its flaming tongue over the cornice.

A few minutes sufficed to prove that the fire would get the better of them.

"Mamma, will you give directions?" said Nest, rightly deeming that none would watch with more jealous eyes over the safety of Gomer.

"Mimi, will you take little Frank to a place

of safety? I must go to my husband. We will take them both to the rose-cottage," continued Nest.

Mimi flew to execute her orders, taking the little granny too, while Nest went to prepare Frank. She knew that it was of the utmost importance he should never be hurried or alarmed, and, above every thing, awakened out of sleep; so she rejoiced in her heart that the accident took place so early.

"Frank," she said, "will you come with me, instead of going to bed?"

"Why? Nessie, I am so tired."

"I want you to sleep at the rose-cottage to-night. Will you tell George to take your things there?"

The valet perceived that something was amiss, and hastily re-arranged Frank's clothes, and prepared to put up others for him.

"I don't like it, Nessie, I don't indeed," said Frank, beginning to look irritated and obstinate.

"We have upset a lamp, dear, which being

full of camphine, has set fire to the drawing-room, and I feared the smell and the smoke might reach you," she said quietly.

"A fire! ha! ha! Nessie, what a fine blaze this house would make. Do you think we shall see it, if it is so?"

"Yes, dear, in the rose-garden."

"Come then, let's go; it will make a glorious candle, and I should like to see it."

George sent a messenger on, to prepare Maggie, while Frank, in his usual slow and deliberate manner, diverted from the present purpose every moment by something trifling, was preparing, with Nest's help, to follow. She knew, if she flurried him, all would be in vain to remove him.

"Shall I take these studs with me, Nessie?" he said.

"No, dear."

"Some eau-de-cologne?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Which dressing-gown shall I have? We

will send for granny, she knows which I should like best."

"She is gone to the rose-cottage, my Frank."

"Naughty granny! why did she not wait for me?" said Frank, testily.

A hurrying rush of doors, and a hot blast of smoke, made Nest shudder.

"If we are not quick, Frank, the great blaze will be out."

"Yes, my Lord, and in ten minutes there will be a severe thunder-storm," said George, just returning. "Your Lordship will just have time to get to the cottage, if you start immediately."

"Who told you to dictate to me?" said Frank, sitting down again, his face flushing with passion.

"Go, George," said Nest, quickly; "get umbrellas and everything ready."

"Impudent rascal!" muttered Frank again. "Don't you think I had better pay him his wages, and dismiss him at once, Nest?"

"No, darling, not to-night, because of the

fire. We shall want all the help we can, to put it out."

"What fire? the great candle?"

"Yes, the great fire is our house of Gomer, and it is in flames, burning, and we ought to try and save it."

"No, don't do that, Nessie, it is an evil house, better let it burn. It never made any one happy within it, and must have been built up in pride and folly. Let it burn."

"But I think we need not burn with it, Frank. You would not like to see your poor Nessie in flames."

"Oh no, no, my Nest, my Nessie; come away, come directly, haste, haste, my pet, my darling!"

He now hurried so fast, that he was down the stairs, unheeding that awful, sullen roar of fire, out at the front door, all unknowing that the thunder-storm was cracking over head.

He dragged Nest out after him, and the pelting rain drenched them in a few minutes, for they had no wraps.

"Oh, Nest," he exclaimed, with a deep sigh, "what is this that I feel, so delicious and fresh, cooling my poor brain? Stay for a moment."

He bent his head, while the rain beat down with heavy, resistless force upon it.

"Frank, my Frank," whispered Nest, "you will get so wet."

But he spoke not.

The fire now began to force its way through the windows, casting a lurid gleam down through the garden, just across the path where they stood. By its glaring light, Nest perceived her husband's face beaming with a glow of ecstasy.

A flash of lightning, a thundering peal above them, were all unnoticed, and the rain poured more heavily than ever. At last he spoke.

"My Nest, I am happy, that dull, dead pain has left my head. I see dark clouds rolling away, one by one, and each one that goes leaves me more happy, more myself. Once, again, I feel like Frank Gomer. Nest, thank God for me."

She did, in a clear voice, ringing with heart's joy, heard amid the pealing thunder, the rattling rain, and the now distinct roar of the fire.

"So this is our house in flames," said Frank; "have they sent to York for the engines? If it goes, God's will be done, and let us thank Him that it is not our only home. Nest, we must caution the people to risk no lives."

"Yes, dearest, all this shall be done, if you will come to the rose-cottage."

"Well! I will go, I am ready, the storm can beat on me there as here. Beautiful Gomer, farewell!"

They gazed on their magnificent home, with all its middle windows circled with tongues of fire, which, spite of the drenching rain, kept creeping up higher and higher.

When arrived at the cottage, they found the dear little grandmother seated before a blazing fire, all their things airing. Nest said nothing, did not even notice the laughing eyes of her boy, as he glanced at her from beneath his new

bed. She thought only of Frank, who, seemingly exhausted, though calm, sunk at once into a deep slumber on the bed prepared for him.

The engines arrived from York in time, with the help of the thunder-storm (which was almost unparalleled in its fury and violence), to save the castle from utter destruction.

The great drawing-room, Lady Jane's former suite of rooms, with those belonging to Lord and Lady Gomer, were completely destroyed, and the bed-rooms above. In all the rooms, excepting the first, the furniture and valuables were rescued.

Lady Jane had, with the calmness and energy of a heroine, given every order, and had not once left the burning house. Mimi was with her mother, and the fire being now quite extinguished, they had established themselves in other apartments not injured.

CHAPTER XI.

It was morning, though night and sleep seemed not to have visited the eyes of most of the inhabitants of Gomer. Nest sat by her husband's bed. She was waiting in awe and fear his wakening. She had sent for Doctor M., and had, in fact, told him of the scene the night before.

The little grandmother had carried off the little Franz to Laurel Grove, but was to return in the evening. Lady Jane was now in the small parlour of the rose-cottage, with the Doctor and Mimi, waiting she knew not what.

"Nest," said Frank, in a cheerful voice, "you have caught no cold from last night's wetting?"

She could not speak, but she gazed into his face; the clear, frank, beautiful eyes looked straight at hers, the light of sense was in them. She laid her head down upon his hands, and fainted away.

A cry from Frank brought the Doctor, Lady Jane, and Mimi, into the room. He saw immediately the change in Lord Gomer, and lifting up the fainting form, he carried her into the next room, and bidding them restore her, shut himself up alone with Lord Gomer. Nest soon recovered, and told Lady Jane the cause. The three together mingled their prayers and tears, during the long interview, but every eye glanced eagerly at the doctor, as he entered. Going solemnly up to Nest, he said, "Lady Gomer, your cup of suffering is not yet over. God sees fit to try you, for wise purposes of His own; and knowing the pious, Christian

spirit that you bear, I deem it best to tell you the exact truth."

Nest became white as the whitest marble, but said, in a low whisper, "Tell me the truth."

"Lord Gomer has recovered his reason, and will not again lose it; but whether from the wetting of last night, or, what is more probable, some pressure of the brain being removed, the evil has fallen elsewhere, I know not. He is paralyzed."

Lady Jane uttered a cry of anguish, a shiver seemed to run through Nest, but gathering her dress round her, she passed from them into her husband's room.

Many doctors were consulted, many remedies tried, but in vain. Excepting his head, every other part of Frank's body was useless and dead.

But as the body decayed and shrank, the mind grew clearer and brighter, the spirit was calm and happy, the face holy with submission.

In the lovely cool drawing-room of Laurel Grove, lay Frank, with a hectic flush on his cheeks, his golden hair flowing in many thick

rings all round his head. On one side was Nest, reading the Psalms to him, with voice mournful and low, but deeply devout. On the other side was the little grandmother, playing with that beautiful mass of curling gold. As he faded away, so did she; she never left that place, never spoke a word to any one. Her eyes seemed to see nothing but Frank; sometimes she whispered to herself, "I was too confident—I was not a Christian—I thought she could save him, and I did not think of God; I put faith in a mortal. Then I thought I could do it, weak, silly little woman. I thought by watching his every look and word, I could save him. But the righteous God could not bear such impiety. The Holy God must have my heart pure and faithful. It is such a wicked little heart, it must go through many fires."

"I wish Elmore would come home," said Frank. "I have so much to tell him, and to say to him, and ask him to do for me."

"We have written for him," said Mimi.

"I wrote to him once; did you ever find the letter, Nessie?" said Frank.

"Yes, love, I have it now," she answered.

"Then be careful to give it to him, and tell him, he is to fulfil its contents, otherwise I shall haunt him.

"Mother, do not sob so," he continued. "Is it not better that I should be at rest, and go to my heavenly home, than live this log that I now am? Not even as clever as you, my boy, able to feed yourself. Come here, little Franz. Lift him up, Nest, and count his curls, and see if he has as many as I have. He has your eyes, Nessie, but otherwise he is like me. I am glad of it, for your sake. Good, loving, gentle wife, when I am gone, and you look at your boy's golden rings of hair, you will know that you guided me to Heaven; and, through God's mercy, I hope to meet you there again. You are very young yet, my Nessie, and have a great deal to do, before I see you again. Our boy to bring up, to make him what his father ought to have been, and Elmore will help you. Then you have

Mimi's happiness to fulfil. And let that be a very early business with you. In honour she must fulfil that marriage; and I rejoice, for her sake, that Hugh Leonard has proved himself to be so worthy of her. Then my mother, Nest, my poor mother! Take her to your heart, for she is a stricken woman. In mercy is she thus bowed down; for oh! Nest, think what a life to lead. Just as she has felt the matchless, boundless wealth of love, a sting of remorse is to be planted in her heart, that only death can remove! Dear mother, do not weep so. Of all the people that will most suffer from my loss, and no poor erring mortal will ever, I know, have such mourners as I shall, you will feel the most. But rely on our Nest. She will tell you, mother, how sad I should be to live like this always, and how more than sad, how painful, cruel, was my other state. Oh God, I thank Thee, I am spared a life, daily murdered by the curse of a shattered brain.

"Think of my present happy state, able to

think for you all, able to settle all my affairs, and, more than all, capable of making my peace with God, 'ere I go hence and be no more seen!'"

It was not all at once that Frank would say thus much; but day by day he would so converse, as if to make them familiar with the prospect of losing him, submissive to the hand of God, willing to let him go.

In all his plans for the future, in all the wishes he left, he made no allusion to his grandmother, who sat silent and absorbed, day after day, hour after hour, playing with the golden rings of his hair.

To the pious, submissive heart of Nest, the merciful bounty of God's love descended in the fulness and measure, its sensitive nature required. She knew what was loss to her, would be gain to him. The unselfish nature of her character forced back the lonely and desolate feelings that came upon her, and made her think, that God, in his mercy, took that immortal

soul, so ripe for heaven, out from its shattered frame. She checked every murmur, she kept herself free from every thought, but heaven and him. Though in her heart she felt she could willingly keep him ever by her, stricken and helpless, requiring even her gentle hand to lift the hair from his brow, feeling it happiness sufficient to have him to nurse and foster; yet she diligently lent herself to the daily work of preparing his soul to meet that God who was about to separate them. And in this holy task she felt her heart raised, her spirit resigned, and she rejoiced, that the soul about to be offered was bathed in the atoning blood of Christ; humble yet joyful, resigned yet hopeful.

Mimi, with the quick, ardent nature, that so moved and ruled her, was almost inconsolable.

"Oh! Nest, he cannot die, he must not! Oh! Frank, our Frank, if Elmore had not gone away, we should not have lost our Frank! He would have watched over him, he would never have permitted this duel. If Frank dies, may

I go too? My Frank, my noble, generous, dearest brother!"

She moaned and wailed thus for hours at a time.

The Lady Jane moved about like a silent stone statue. Day by day, did the frost of secret, bitter remorse whiten her hair; day by day, did hours of mental grief and agony leave their marks upon her brow. Always at hand, if anything was required; always to the moment, bearing the strengthening cordial to her son, or the fading grandmother; she yet spoke not. Hot silent tears would roll, one by one, as if extorted, down her pallid cheeks. She walked a living grief.

"I am very happy I have seen my dear aunt," said Frank, with difficulty, as he lay back one day, white and exhausted; "I have given her all my orders for Elmore. Nessie, you must be sure to consult my aunt in any

difficulty, until Elmore comes home, then he will take care of you, my Nessie; my sweet, fond Nessie, the pearl of pearls!"

"No," said his grandmother, abruptly.

"Yes, my granny, she is; but we gave her too hard a task to do, and we did not help her. Our little Franz, granny, will be happy; he will not thwart her as we did. I feel strangely happy. Here, Nest, lay your hand here, on my heart—it beats now, one, two. Wipe the dew from my forehead. Nessie, my Nest, come closer, nearer—I feel your breath, your soft lips. I leave you; but I die happy!"

His eyes closed. Suddenly, the little grandmother rose from her seat, and feebly walking to Lady Jane, said, "I forgive you." Then returning with tottering step, she fondly laid her withered hand on Nest's head, saying, "'Tis true, Pearl of Pearls!" She faltered; Lady Jane threw a supporting arm around her, the little head drooped—drooped down on the

pillow by her grandson. One long, deep sigh fluttered from her heart.

They lay there on one pillow, the little, gentle, fair old woman, and the fine, handsome young man—they were both dead!

CHAPTER XII.

The good Duchess of Nairn is sitting, smiling through tears of joy, in her lovely summer parlour. The beloved truant has returned, that dearest, idolised son, after such years of absence.

"Dearest mother, you are too good to your naughty runaway. I own it was selfishness that kept me so long from your side. I could not get that black speck out of my heart, and when I did, I heard all the sad news at Gomer. My heart ached so, that through selfishness again, I could not return to see their grief. If

I had come home, I should have been of no assistance, I should have been just cruelly too late. And to see my dear Frank die and those poor girls in such grief—my dear mother, I am not a stone, I could not have borne it. I own it was selfish, bad; but unless I could have died for that poor, dear boy, I would not have witnessed such misery for kingdoms."

She could find no fault with him now he was returned, looking so noble, so princely; she had almost forgotten—surely, she must have forgotten, that he bore himself with such graceful dignity, that he stepped a king; that his noble brow was so broad and massive, his features so chiselled out in sculpture's beauty; his eyes so clear, so fresh, so sunny, so beaming with love; sunburnt he was, but it was such a rich, beautiful, healthful brown, and his short, crisp curls clustered round his neck, befitting fringe for the ivory head, bearing itself with such strength of goodness and intellect.

And when the handsome, haughty mouth

opened with a smile, the sunshine of the heart burst forth in floods of sweet humour and benignity.

No wonder that she gazed, and could only gaze on her son, her noble son.

"I would not tell you, or any one of my coming," said he, "to spare you, my mother, any suspense; to spare Stewart the trouble of making a day of rejoicing. After an absence like mine, the heart is too full to permit a riotous joy to enter it, on returning to a mother like mine, a home such as this is! I needed the walk through the park, silent and thoughtful, to curb my boyish delight, my exquisite happiness. Ah! mother, what a gift is this life! The breath one draws, the strength one feels, the delights of the eyes, the boundless treasures of thought and reason, and, above all, the thankful heart, wherewith to praise the Giver of it all. What lot is fairer than mine? the power to enjoy life, and the power to enable others to do so; and such might have been our

poor Frank's lot. Mother, you must forgive me for going any where, before seeing you; but it was necessary to my cure, necessary for my heart, that I should not undertake the charge Frank has left me, without feeling that I did so from the purest motives of love to him."

"My son, he did not doubt you; he seemed to know what made you forsake your home."

"I told him, my dear mother, I told him all, and therefore it is that I wish to have no feelings of self, mixed up with this sacred duty; if there are, I shall not undertake it; but it is too soon to tell you all my feelings. I went to the rose-garden, just as I went before, not with the idea of seeing any one, but to look on that scene of my painful dream once more. I walked there, taking my station again behind the knotted old beech-tree; there were people in it.

"Mother, is she ill, or has she been so, that she looks so shadowy and spirit-like?"

"No, my son, she has not been ill, but her

young life was too soon burdened with cares; the spirit is willing to bear her appointed lot, but the frame is fragile. She never complains, she rarely speaks, but a heart so tender as hers must be bruised; nothing that we can do will help her. God and nature are her only restorers."

"She moved among the rose-trees, as if her spirit was away; her eyes, so large and dark, seemed looking into futurity. Her face so small and white, whiter than the little white cap under which the line of hair lay so dark, looked ethereal. Are you sure, mother, she is well? Do you question her, mother, if aught ails her? Do you visit her, mother? and look after her? Do you soothe her wounded heart, with your gentle sympathy?"

"I try, my son, I try. But you know she has no ordinary nature. I think she feels, from some few sentences that dropped from her lips, that she something deserved her lot, (though we know so differently). She was so young, and the poor little grandmother made a lode-star of

her, put her in the place of God, and she grew somewhat confident of guiding her husband through the mists of his mother's pride and arrogance."

"Dear, gentle heart! she would have done so, had he but suffered her," he said.

"She said one day to me, 'Auntie, you must not think I am always mourning. I know my Frank was taken from me, because I was too sure that when Lady Jane left, he was saved, and that I had done it. He is happy, I am punished. I only weep in humble submission, not in complaint.'"

"Dearest, gentlest heart! but go on, mother."

"I can hardly shape in words, what her thoughts are, but I think you need have no fears for her health. It is not like her, to mourn for the sake of mourning. Her life is very precious to her child; and Lady Jane—ah! Elmore, that poor woman—"

"I saw her, mother; beside that one shadowy figure, with its dark dress, the little snow-

white collar, and the pure white cap, from which beamed forth such holy eyes, there was a lovely girl, with a fine, full, exquisite figure, a face with roses and lilies running riot, and chestnut curls down to her waist. I knew it was Mimi; that one child of Lady Jane's is, at all events, saved. It was hard to say which beamed most in her lovely face, beauty or goodness.

"Then, mother, I saw, seated on a rustic chair, a faded, broken figure; the eyes were shaded from the too glaring sun by a screen, held with fingers trembling with weak old age. Snow-white hair was parted on each side of what had been a beautiful face. My mother, what a wreck! Leaning against her knee was a boy, such a lovely fellow, with curls of golden hair, falling like a halo round his beautiful face. He was looking up at her, with eyes of which there are but one other pair in the world to match them. The serious, loving expression, so like hers. She was lecturing him:

"'You must not call me Lady Jane, but grandmamma; I am your grandmamma.'

"'Gan-ma such long word,' lisped the boy.

"'Then I shall not love you, if you won't.'

"'Oh yes, must love Franz; me call you Ganny.'

"She stooped and kissed him fondly, saying,

"'Yes, call me Granny. It is a loving word.'

"Then I came away, mother, thoughtful, pondering over this scene. Surely, if Nest has wrecked her own happiness, she has achieved a triumph that angels might envy her. She has lost her husband in this world, but she has gained that haughty, proud, selfish soul for ever."

"It is true, after her son's death, for many months, Lady Jane was bordering on insanity. Nest devoted herself to her, with such pure, holy, singleness of heart, that she brought her out of that gulf of despair, a gentle, humble Christian. I can assure you, no sight ever was so touching; nothing ever moved me, to such a degree, as the first view of those two together,

on Lady Jane's restoration. But you must see them, to judge yourself."

"What has become of old Malcolm?" said the Duke.

"He has really proved himself a good and amiable man, and without his help, I do not suppose our Nest could have borne Lady Jane's state with impunity. As soon as he heard of her illness, and that she was threatened with blindness, he came to offer to take charge of her, nurse her (she was also supposed to be going permanently deranged), do everything for her, freeing Nest and Mimi from the responsibility. But they begged him to assist them, which he did, with real true kindness of heart, and was of the greatest use. He comes now to visit her once a month, and they meet like good, old, attached friends. Nest wanted him to live with them, but he is obstinate in refusing: 'Too much felicity, too little to do, may make a beast of me again!' He says, 'Besides, I have made a home for myself,

on my little estate; the people are beginning to like me a little, and I have a poor niece, a relation, or connection, I should say, living with me, and she has such bad health, I don't like to leave her for long—' "

A knock at the door interrupted this long conversation. It was Mr. Stewart. The Duke drew a little aside, while Stewart, walking up to the Duchess, with the crabbed, unhappy look on his face, that he had worn ever since the Duke went away, said:

"I ax your Grace's pardon, but I hae come to luik after a bit stranger mon, that was seen to loup in at ae window in the hall; I hae been high and low, yer Grace, and I no can speer him in ony way. My certie! yon 'ill be him; I ken, my mon, ye might as weel hae entered like a gentlemon. The Lord be guide to me! I'se but silly sine his Grace went; but I'll no believe there's another mon like him. Be gude to us, for the Lord's sake, and say yer come back to yer ain."

"I don't think any one but me knows the secret of 'louping in at that ae window,' Stewart. How are you, old fellow?"

"I am no that weel," said Stewart, the tears rolling down his cheeks, and his hands shaking with inward emotion, while he deemed it but proper to mark the high displeasure he felt at the Duke's long absence, by apparent indifference at receiving him.

"Ah! I am sorry for that; you have been working too hard while I was away."

"Deed!" said the old Scot, seizing the opportunity of venting his pent-up feelings, "ye may be ae thankful, her Grace and me's to the fore. It's no thanks to ye, my Lord Duke, we are not baith pitten away in the grave-yard, wi' care and anxieties."

"Tut, tut! except that you look very cross, you seem as well as ever, my man; and my dearest mother, never better, thank God!"

"Hey, sirs! thank God, if ye weel; I am glad ye havna forgotten Him, in ae yere heathen

travels. But ye hae getten hoame, with a' your old tricks, never gi'en a word, but coming hame like a thief, in at ae window, instead of being welcomed as a Duke should be."

"Well, to show you I have returned home determined to be amiable, go and give any orders you like, in the way of rejoicing, so that you don't expect to make a show of me."

"And wad I tell the peeple, their Duke was come hame, and na hae a substantial body to show? Na! Na! ye had best show yersel, or may-be when I tell the news, they'll pull Nairn castle down, to see if it's true, that your'e once mair in it."

"I'll submit then to anything you like, Stewart; only be merciful."

"Them as shows no mercy, needs none. But I'm mad, to be clecking here, when I hae news to tell, that'll set the folks wild wi' joy. But I wadna leave yer Grace, wi'out a word of welcome. I am but a puir body, but I am ready to gie up a' the gear I hae in the world,

and I'll dee now wi' pleasure and content, that I hae seen your gracious face again."

"Dear Stewart," said the Duke, "I cannot repent so long an absence, when I have such hearts-welcome home again."

"Hey!" said the old man, jumping at the mention of the long absence, "dinna ye thole things gang on weel wi'out yer Grace's eye? I am thinking I'll just be off mysel, and then yer Grace maun stay at hame. But I'll away wi' the news. I'll no ways deny, I'm just distracted with joy, mysel."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE news spread far and wide, bonfires were lit, bells rang, the usual orderly appearance of Nairn presented a most unwonted aspect. While he showed himself to his people, and walked among them, again he thanked God for the bliss of living; again his regal eye lit up with pleasure, as he thought with how little trouble to himself, he would confer such happiness.

"Whatever may be my lot," said his noble heart to himself, "I thank God for the power I have to bestow this happiness, and still more for the will to do it."

Universal, overpowering, maddening as seemed the joy of his return, it was the love, the warmth, the heartiness of it, that affected him most.

Two or three days passed, and yet there was no abatement of enthusiasm.

"Well! my dear mother, I think by this time all this noise must have reached Gomer; suppose you let me drive you over to call? and by that means, I shall not only have a little peace and quiet, but your company all to myself.—

"Now, my dear mother, tell me some more news. What has become of that unfortunate Augusta?"

"We none of us know; I believe Lady Jane has sent in every direction for tidings of her."

"I saw Sir John West in Venice, and felt him too."

"How do you mean, my dear son?"

"He ran a stiletto into my side, not above six months ago. He did not, however, calculate on the indomitable spirit of the ancient Briton, which (as Macaulay says) is so grafted on the

stock of the brave Normans, learned Saxons, and never-to-be-outdone Danes, 'that they flog the world,' as Paddy would say. But don't be alarmed, my dear mother. A little blood-letting in the spring, is beneficial, physicians say."

"But, my son, his motive?"

"I imagine, he thought I was coming home to try and marry a poor forlorn girl, who had not lost her first husband above six months. Did you not know that he was madly in love with our Nest, from the very moment he first saw her?"

"I tremble, Elmore, lest he should come, and do you some harm."

"That he cannot do, mother, for various reasons; in the first place, during the scuffle he and I had, not only his leg was broken, but he had an ugly thump on the head, from which he had not recovered when I left. It was owing to this blow, that I discovered my friend. For after knocking him down, like any other raw John Bull, I must needs pick him up again, to see if I had hurt him. And there was no mistake

about that. I had to get nurses and doctors for him, and pay all his bills; altogether, that one blow cost me a sum that would turn Stewart's brain for a week. And where is dear, amiable Miss West?"

"She has married a Captain Winstone, and has gone with her husband to Ceylon."

"Well, joy go with her; and Gomer is rebuilding?"

"Yes, but on a much smaller scale, and in very much better taste."

"Nest's doing?"

"Yes, my son. But they still live in the part that was not injured."

"And what are they going to do with that pretty Mimi?"

"You know that poor Frank consented to her marriage at last. She will not, however leave her mother or Nest, while they require her. But the year of mourning has now gone by some months: I think she has a crotchet in her head, to wait until you arrive."

"Suppose I say I will not consent? But is the Mr. Leonard, who has been patenting some new steam inventions, the *ci-devant* Alphonso?"

"Yes, he is; and more than that, when I was visiting at Coadmore last summer, I fell quite in love with him. He has all the appearance of a hero of romance, with a very simple, noble mind. And his talents as an engineer, are something wonderful."

"Well! I think then we must contrive to ally our humble selves to so much goodness and talent, and civilly ask the great engineer to turn from his kettles and cauldrons, and look benignly on our little Mimi."

"She has been so good; she is such a sweet, dear girl!"

"Here we are. Now, though I have been up to the top of the biggest pyramid, and gazed into the calm, godlike face of the immortal Sphinx, I feel very much like a whipped school-boy. This comes of having such a tender heart.

I wish I could put mine into a box, and leave it behind, on some occasions."

As they entered the room, the Duke had just time to see the blood rushing over brow, face, neck, down to the little fingers; but when he turned from taking Lady Jane's hand, to speak to Nest, marble was not more white, ashes not paler than the trembling lips that tried to speak a welcome. He merely pressed the little cold hand, and going up to Mimi, took her in his arms, and fondly kissed her several times on the forehead, saying something kind and in praise between each kiss.

Then snatching up the boy, he asked him various questions, until, by degrees, Lady Jane's sobs grew fainter, Nest's colour more natural.

He then spoke so calmly, so feelingly, with the manly fervour of a Christian gentleman, at the same time using the pathos and words of a tender woman, that they felt he was come to bless them, to console them, to be to them a second Frank; and the interview passed off with a pleasing, holy calm upon all.

They felt that he was a true mourner with them, and he felt that the conviction of his sympathy was balm to them.

They met often, for, by degrees, Elmore took his place, as guardian and trustee for his godson.

"Not that I mean to hold it, if either you or young Franz prove disobedient, Nest," he said to her.

"You have hitherto gone on very well without me, and if I find you troublesome at the end of the year, I shall resign," he continued, as she said nothing.

"Oh, no! cousin, we have no one but you to love and take care of us. We will be very good and amiable, won't we, Franz?" and the ghost of a smile flitted over her face.

She had given Elmore her husband's last letter to him, written before his accident. He read it and put it away, without showing it to her, or any one.

Lady Jane had consulted him about the search for Augusta. "I cannot rest until I

find her; I must try to repair the injury I have done her, in givin g her so vain and faulty an education," she said.

"You expect Mr. Malcolm to-morrow, don't you? for he will be more acute than I shall, in such a matter," said the Duke.

Mr. Malcolm proved rather more than acute; for, after many hems and haws, he allowed that the young connection who lived with him, and about whose health he was so anxious, was no other than Augusta herself.

"You see, my dear Duke, I had eaten of their bread, drank of their cup, lived in their house, and at last did that irreparable mischief to poor, dear Frank, so I felt myself in a measure called upon to do all that lay in my poor power for the family. So I set to work, to find that poor misguided thing. Luckily I found her, in the very depths of misery, disgrace, and poverty; in fact, I should be sorry to say what she was. However, as I said before, it is lucky she was so low in everything,

for her pride and ill-humour are no ways mended, and she would be off from me, except that I make her as comfortable as I can. She is in miserable health, and her mind as bad as her body, so that she is no ways agreeable; but I think nothing of that. She may be as cross and ungrateful as she pleases; she is Frank's sister. And if she is a little provoking sometimes, I always say that to myself with comfort, poor silly soul, as she is."

The Duke took Mr. Malcolm's hand in his, with genuine cordiality and pleasure.

"Now say nothing, pray don't. I should never have said anything, but for Lady Jane's uneasiness. I am not a thorough-paced villain, and that's all I can say for myself. And one could not live in the house, with that poor angel, without being the better for it. Her gentle, quiet look, cuts me to the heart; and because it does so, I come here to look at her. It steadies me, and she is so good to bear me near her," he continued.

Mr. Malcolm bore all the thanks he got, with very great impatience and ill-humour. "He did not deserve them, and he would not have them," he said.

He took from Lady Jane a letter to Augusta, who returned an ill-written, ill-expressed, ill-humoured answer, that fully shewed she was but little changed, and that Mr. Malcolm led no life of roses.

CHAPTER XIV.

"I WILL stay and live with you, if you like, mamma," said Mimi one day to her mother; "but I marry no other man than Hugh, your former page."

"My child, do so; you have my full consent. Good comes out of the pride and folly with which I spent such sums of money on his education. May that education, joined to his natural talents and high principles, make you happy, my good and dear child! Remember, if you are not so, on whom the punishment will fall most heavily."

So the marriage took place, quietly, at Coadmore.

The Duke gave Mimi away, with a mental expression of wonder, at the events time brings forth, and a great admiration of the bridegroom.

"They are a very handsome couple," said he, as they watched the pair drive away, on their nuptial tour; "and very good contrasts; he so dark and Spanish-looking, and she so thoroughly Saxon. I always thought him a wonderfully handsome fellow, when he stood like a bronze statue, at the bottom of the back-stairs."

He looked at Lady Jane, as he said this, but she did not even wince.

"I believe that poor woman is sincere, after all," said he to himself.

Lady Jane was sincere, for she was going to take the poor, unhappy Augusta to Madeira, symptoms of consumption showing themselves; yet she made no boast. When Elmore saw the

agonized tears she wept, every time Nest left the room, solely because she was to part from her, he wondered; but he said, "She acts from duty."

Of course, none of the family had seen Augusta, and she and Lady Jane were to meet for the first time, on board the ship, at Augusta's own request.

"I do not like leaving my child all alone," said Lady Jane, the last evening, as the Duke tried to console her.

"Do you know, I think it will do her good," said he; "I think she is looking forward to it; she seems to require a something yet, that we cannot do for her. She will sing Frank's requiem by her beloved waves, and having satisfied her tender soul, she will turn her eyes once more on the world, to do her duty therein. She has never had time for thought, poor, bruised heart! and she must cast her burden on the Lord!"

The Duke was right. She was panting,

pining to be alone, to tell her griefs to the wild waves, to murmur her sorrow within her beloved caverns.

She took leave of them both with a gentle, grave pleasure; and for three months, the lonely heart mourned by itself. During that time, Mimi and Hugh were (strange tour, for a bride and bridegroom!) visiting every manufacturing place in England, and from thence proceeded abroad, not having leave to return to Coadmore for three months. This was to be eventually their home, and the gentle Nest was, all unknown to them, preparing it for their return.

Lady Jane was settled at Madeira; her letters were constant to "her child." She had no happy news to impart, but they grew interesting to Nest; for she traced in them the progress of a good and holy change, wrought out by the painful life she was leading.

All unknown to Nest, during her three months' seclusion, did the Duke visit her several times. And walking over from the neighbouring town,

would satisfy himself of her looks and health, and then walk back again, returning to his mother each time in better spirits. "She has got a colour, mother, and she jumped from one rock to another, with little Franz on her shoulder, as nimble as a kid. The troubled look is leaving her eyes. She walked for an hour by the waves, and sang to them, in a low, clear voice. She will leave her youth's dream of happiness, and reality of woe, down in those caverns, and return to us a new being."

Mimi and Hugh returned home, to find Nest's eyes sparkling with delight, as of old, as she welcomed them. She was like herself, as she showed them over Coadmore. So beautiful and adorned, they thought it must be a new Coadmore. She grew quite merry and mirthful at their delighted exclamations, she enjoyed their extreme happiness; and when little Franz, in the exuberance of all this noise and delight, pulled off his mother's cap, in his endeavours to keep himself safe on her shoulders, she did not offer

to replace it, but sat all the evening with her magnificent hair wound round her head, like the Nest of old.

Nest staid with them a month, and then returned to Gomer, where she lived a lonely life, it is true, but a useful one.

"My mother wants you to come and spend a few days with us, Nest; she has some company coming," said the Duke, one day.

"Then, cousin, I think I cannot come."

"She asked you on purpose; but do as you please. If you are going to shut yourself up all your life, it is useless for me to teaze myself with your affairs. It will be much more kind, if I give you something to do, in looking after them yourself."

"Don't be cross, cousin, I will come if you wish it. I did not think you cared."

"Oh! you did not think I cared. I happen to care a great deal," said he.

"May I bring Franz?" said she, blushing.

"Of course, I would not have you come with-

out my godson. Am I to drive you there?" he continued.

"If you please, cousin, if it is not inconvenient."

"It is not particularly inconvenient," said the Duke, drily; "but I thought you might be prudish. You know a Duke cannot do things in the dark, like an ordinary mortal. Neither can a young and lovely woman, like Lady Gomer, act, without all the world commenting thereon. The world might remark on you and me driving together."

"But you don't care for that, do you, cousin?"

"Not a jot. But they may say, we are going to be married, Nest."

"Very true," said Nest, laughing; "that will be a good joke."

"Good joke!" said the Duke, muttering angrily to himself. But seeing surprise on Nest's face, he said, "Come, get ready, and order Franz and the abigails to follow. Put up some nice dresses, as my mother and I are going to show you off."

Nest got into the pony carriage, and was amused at the vast care with which Elmore wrapped her up.

"You make me think I am some sick old woman," she said, smiling.

"One cannot be too careful of a good thing. But you are not old, thank goodness; and you are not sick, if one may judge by the manner in which you skipped over the rocks at Coadmore."

"When did you see me, cousin?"

"Oh, my mother sent me every now and then, to see if you were dull or moping, and I did not care to teaze you with my presence."

"How kind and thoughtful of you, dear cousin!"

"Talking of thoughtful, puts me in mind of what I have often thought of—something you once said, about there being no second-love."

"I have forgotten what I said," said Nest.

"I have not, but I won't recapitulate it all; I just want to know, if I was right in thinking you said, a true heart can never love again.

Don't answer in a hurry—(confound these ponies!)."

"Cousin, you pulled the wrong rein."

"Well! I suppose I did. Good ponies! good fellows, softly! Well, what do you think?"

"I think they are quiet now, Elmore."

"Hang the ponies! I mean—well, never mind—" he said, testily.

They drove on in silence. At last he said, "Will you let me drive you home again?"

"Oh yes, cousin, but I am not there yet; and I suppose you don't want me to leave immediately?"

"I would never have you leave, if I could help it," he said, but in so low a voice, Nest hardly caught the words.

"Mr Stewart does not like you to come so often to Gomer, I dare say, Elmore. I think he would sit in your pocket all day," she said.

"He will have his way, shortly; for I am thinking of giving up the charge of you and Franz and Gomer."

"Oh, cousin!" said Nest, her eyes filling with tears, "do not say such a cruel thing. What are we to do without you? Am I not lonely and desolate enough, without losing you?"

"Come, don't cry, child, I have not yet made up my mind. Only you are disobedient, you will not answer my question."

"Which question? I will answer anything, so that you will not consider me disobedient."

"About second-love, Nest."

"I think, cousin, you will find that question best answered in your own heart. I do not think one person can judge of another in such a matter."

"I, however, like your thoughts, and would wish to hear them," said he.

"In your case, I would think you wise to love again. In a woman, I think not."

"I cannot see the least use in separating the opinions of the two sexes in that way," said the Duke; but he could say no more, for again the high-spirited ponies nearly eloped with them,

making a manifest dart at the hedge-row. Elmore glanced at Nest, she was utterly free from fear.

She looked so lovely, so fresh, that he said to himself, "I would give my Dukedom, to touch those sweet lips."

Nest had a happy visit at Nairn. She enjoyed the congenial company, that the Duchess had gathered round her. She was conscious of being an object of much interest to all present, of affection to the Duchess, of untiring, unceasing watchfulness to the Duke.

She spoke to her Frank at night, in her dreams, saying, "See, love! your Nest is happy."

"Well, Stewart, have you seen Lady Gomer since she has been here?"

"Yes, your Grace," said Stewart, in his dryest, most cold manner.

"She looks more like Miss Herbert than ever."

"She's vara pratty, yer Grace."

"Why, man, how coldly you talk! very different to what you did four years ago."

"Four years mak' a difference, yer Grace."

"But those four years have improved her, you old Scotch stone."

"May be, yer Grace."

The Duke went off in a pet, while the old Scotch stone laughed to himself, and said, "I ken better than to meddle wi' love matters. A third body aye maks a mess. The Lord send it'll come true, and that I may see that fair, winsome body the Duchess of Nairn. I'll want naething mair then, but sax feet o' earth. Pretty, indeed! go from Johnny Groat's to Land's End, pick up a' the beauty you'll see, and you'll mak' nothing like thou. It's yong days yet, to see her e'en loving; but aye, his Grace he'd kiss the flowers she treads, and he thinks I ken naething about it."

CHAPTER XV.

LADY JANE came home after seven months' absence.

"I found I could do Augusta no good; so, after telling her history to the English clergyman there, he consented to receive her as a boarder into his family. He has no children, but a very excellent, cheerful wife, who is a great musical genius. If she is to be saved, it will be through their exertions. As for me, I only made her worse. And, my child, my Nessie, your poor mother has had a bitter life of it. Augusta's pride made mine bite the dust. I saw

the evil spirit she had inherited from me, breaking out in all she said and did. I saw my soul, as it were, naked and wicked, in her hands. I remembered the time, when, all being children together, I singled her out from Frank and Mimi, as the only one worthy of whatever affection I had to bestow; because she was like me, and because the others had their poor father's looks and temper. The seven months that I have endured, with what I can but term my former self, could only have been borne from stern determination. It has shortened my life, Nessie, but I hope been of use to my soul. I pined for you, my child—I longed to look into your sweet, calm eyes. You must not send me from you. Nessie, let me stay near you, as long as I live."

"Dear mamma, poor, dear mamma! are you not mine now? am I not in the place of Frank to you?"

"Thank you, darling; I feared, as I came home, that you would have got accustomed to

do without me. Nay, that you would be relieved from the sight of one, to whom you owed the misery of your life."

"But, mamma, I left my sorrow at Coadmore. The spirit of Frank walked by me on the sea-shore, spoke to me in the waves, whispered to me through the winds. It said that I had a purpose to live for, a long life to lead, before I could join him. That he was happy, a ministering angel, and that I must remember those among whom I lived. That I could do him no good now, but by being happy, and making others so. He said, mamma, that I was to live for you, and be your child, instead of him. I was to live for Mimi and her husband, for all at Gomer, all at Nairn; that I was to pluck the flowers of happiness, strewn in my path. That I was to guard his boy, so like himself, as he knew I should do. So, mamma, I laid my youth's dream down there, and I am happy; happy in your affection, my boy's strength and beauty, the love of those whose love I care

for, the useful life I lead, the power to do good, and the wish. But, mamma, if you did not live with me, my sweetest, fairest flower of life would die."

"God bless you, my child! I believe all you say, and the more, because without your affection, I should soon pine and die."

"Well, Lady Jane," said the Duke, the first time he came to pay his respects to her, after her arrival, "I am glad to see you at home again. Don't you think we have taken good care of your two children, the little and big one, while you were away?"

"Indeed you have; I never saw Nest looking better, or more lovely, and Franz is wonderfully grown."

"I hope you don't mean to make Nest too happy here."

"Why, dear Elmore?"

"Because I want to transplant her to Nairn."

The Lady Jane shrunk as if struck with pain.

"She is everything in the world to me," she faltered.

"I know it, I know it," said the Duke, "and that is why I mentioned the matter so abruptly. But do not grieve. I do not even yet know if she has thought of such a thing. But you must know and feel it is impossible to see and be with her, without loving her. Highly as you think of me, it was nothing but envying our poor Frank, and loving her more than was seemly, that drove me from home all those years. But mark me, I did not leave them, until I saw them happy, free from——"

"Don't hesitate, my dear Elmore. I know what you would say—free from me."

"Something very like it, indeed. Then I left, determined to school my heart into a proper state I succeeded, and was coming home, when I heard of poor Frank's death. I then waited to school myself still more, to know if I could,

with honour to myself, and justice to him, accept the trust he had imposed upon me. I did; I thought the very fact of Nest's being a widow, would make her, in my eyes, a thing sacred and holy. But, Jane, I make you my judge. When she left off those odious caps, my virtue got weaker and more weak. Do you blame me?"

"My Nest! my Nest! I must lose her," sobbed Lady Jane.

"Dear Jane, does not your love for her, show how irresistible she must be to me? But do not grieve so. There is such a delicate, sensitive nature about her, that she may, after all, refuse my love. And it is such, that I will not take her hand, unless I have her heart too. So, Jane, don't grieve; you may keep her yet, in spite of me."

"No, Elmore, no, she is so young, scarcely more than twenty-two; she deserves your love, the affection of your noble, tender heart; from the first, you discovered her worth and value, and were her truest friend. Take her, you deserve her."

"Not so fast. I am very nervous about her taking me," said the Duke.

"She will, I feel sure; she can well appreciate the gift of such a heart as yours."

"Do you know, Jane, you surprise me? I can see by your pale cheek, your quivering lips, how much this sacrifice costs you. I will not be out-done in generosity. I will let six months go by, ere I ask her, just to accustom you to it."

"Thanks, thanks, Elmore! in losing her, I lose what seems my life."

"And I will make a bargain with you. You shall be my friend in this matter, and prepare her by degrees; and I will come over here, sanctioned by your presence, as often as I like, to make love, and to get her so used to my attentions, that she will not fly off with fear, when I make my wishes known."

"I will, indeed, be your friend. I will do all I can. How rightly you judge her. She might, in the first surprise, refuse you, or not like to

leave me, or say something that she might hereafter repent."

"Thank you; I shall commence laying siege to-day. I begin to think a great deal more of success, with so powerful a coadjutor."

They went to Nest's room. She was teaching her boy his daily lesson.

"Why you not say lessons too, mamma?" said Franz, as they entered, not being in a very learned mood.

"Shall I teach her, Franz?" said the Duke, entering.

"Yes, do, do, godpa; and if she naughty, put her dere."

"I shall take her into the garden to learn. I wish, Nest, you would come with me, and show me the best roses. I want to bud some of yours on mine."

She rose with alacrity, and, quite unusual with him, he drew her arm in his, and as they went on their way, he raised her hand, and kissed it.

"Elmore!" said Nest, blushing.

"Well; why should I not? I am very fond of you, and you will not permit me any other sort of kiss."

"I do not know what you mean, cousin."

"Ah! I see your memory is a bad one. You have forgotten that you once refused me, at Coadmore, the same welcome that Mimi gave me."

"I did not think, cousin, that you would remember such foolish things, with such ill will."

"I don't call any thing foolish, that has to do with you, and there is no ill will in my heart, but I mourn over the remembrance."

"Pray don't do so any more, cousin. I am very sorry."

"Sorrow is the first thing towards an amendment. This is rather a public place to put you to a trial, otherwise I would see if you really repented."

"I begin to think with Mr. Stewart, that you are getting what he calls 'unco queer' in your ways, cousin."

"When did you see that savage old fellow?"

"He came here in quest of you, and said all his time was spent in trying to find you. He said you had ordered ten thousand cedrus deodars, for your new plantations, and they were twenty shillings a hundred. Not even a Duke's income would warrant such extravagance, he said."

"I think I must have made a little mistake. I meant to order one thousand, and a bushel of seed. But did he accuse me of any other sin?"

"Yes; he said you had scribbled his day-book, all over, with such odd things, he could not suffer any of the people to see it, and he was obliged to get a new one."

"Ah! I remember—I was drawing birds' nests. Did he tell you, Nest?"

"He said something about it, and I agree with him, that you are—not quite yourself, cousin."

"It is all your fault; you give me so much to do, and occupy my time so much; you and

Franz and your affairs, that I have no time to attend to my own matters."

"Franz and I are very sorry."

"I think I'll take you and Franz away to live with me."

"You must, then, also take mamma," answered Nest, half blushing, half smiling.

"Nest, you are a wonderful creature; every time I look at Lady Jane, I think so."

"Nay, cousin, give God the glory. He worketh in His own way."

"But humanly speaking, Nest, you have been the means of making her what she is."

"I think, Elmore, that the solitary, sad life she led for so many months at Kirkly, paved the way for feelings and impressions that she had never felt before. Her life had been so full of occupation, so rife with the world's cares and ideas, that she never, until she went to Kirkly, felt the want of affection, or had realised the blessings of love."

"It may be so, Nest; besides, every period of

life has its feelings. Hers for the pomps and vanities of life might have been waning, and thus have been prepared to give place to other and better feelings."

"Yes, cousin, and another thing. I certainly have not had much experience, but I cannot help thinking it is a mistaken notion to imagine that age deadens the feelings, and that years harden the heart. I cannot remember my dearest grandmother, our darling little granny, your own fond mother, without thinking that such love as theirs, shames the impetuous, yet selfish affection of youth."

"Your doctrine is rather new, Nest, and your examples, being out of the common, have not the weight to enforce it, that they should have."

"Then mamma, Elmore—take her, to prove what I think."

"She has, from an heathen, become a Christian, Nest. That would be sufficient to change her from a demon to an angel."

"Then take yourself. Ask your heart, if it

is less susceptible to the soft feelings of pity, sorrow and love, than when you were in the pride of youth, just entering the portals of life and hope?"

A strong emotion shook the Duke's frame, tinging his fine features with a glow pure and ruddy as ever flowed through a woman's cheek.

"Cousin! pardon me, I had forgotten I was led away by my own feelings, and remembered not, how I might awaken painful thoughts in you."

"You awoke nothing painful, Nest," said he, in the low voice of suppressed emotion. "On the contrary, I but felt in my inmost heart, how true were your words. I will tell you my little historiette, if you would like to hear it. You will then see, Nest, that I have rather cause to bless God for His omniscient hand, than to murmur, that I am still without His best earthly gift."

"I should like it, Elmore, if it will not pain you."

"So, you think I shall feel it painful to sit by you, look into your speaking eyes, obtain from you a murmur of sympathy, perhaps a kind touch, or word of praise. Ah! Nest, does not your experience tell you, that no recollections are painful, if recorded to the heart that one trusts and loves, equally as the heart that beats in one's own bosom? On the contrary, such confidence is like the intercourse promised us in the realms above."

"That is true, Elmore, but it is not often that such confidences can be given in this world; we are made up of too much that is selfish and contradictory."

"But you, Nest, you possess that heart so fine, so delicate, so true to every pulse."

"Nay, cousin, proceed. I must shortly return to mamma."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DUKE'S STORY.

"I MUST not tire you, Nest, with many antecedents; nevertheless, I must give you some notion as to what I was as a boy, in order that you may judge, if the man has profited by his opportunities and disappointments. My father, in early life, was in the army. When he married my dear mother, he did not like the idea of carrying her about as part of the baggage of his regiment, and, without consulting her, he sold out, bought a small estate, with all the money

he possessed, in Cornwall, and busying himself with making the house habitable for his wife, he pleased himself with the idea of taking her there on their bridal trip, and if she was satisfied and contented with it, to have the supreme satisfaction of telling her it was her own. My mother had £300 per annum, and he being of moderate opinions, and easily pleased, deemed that with the profits of his farm ground, they would be 'passing rich.' Like most military men, accustomed to the active life that the Peninsular war (then just over) had engendered, he never intended sitting down to an idle life of ease and indolence. His little estate had cost him all the money he possessed, and out of his farm he expected the interest.

"I believe, had I the art of embellishing my tale, a very pretty scene could be told of my mother's delight of the lovely cottage, in which she spent her honeymoon, and her joyful surprise on discovering she might spend her life there, if she desired it. But I am only a plain-

spoken man, Nest, as I dare say you have long ago discovered."

"If you fish for compliments, cousin, you will obtain none from me; pray go on," was Nest's obdurate answer.

"Well, they lived there. When I say they were happy, I believe I do not half express their real feelings. To people of certain natures, Nest, a congenial soul so vivifies the natural life, that one might suppose the double spirit dwelt within one frame. People of the world might have considered my father and mother to be objects of pity. Within a circle of probability, they might have boundless wealth, and the highest rank of the land, short of royalty. A lucky stroke of fortune, and this would befal them; whereas, at present he was a farmer, working as hard as his own labourers, and she was a true farmer's wife, whose occupations consisted principally in accompanying her husband as much as she could, on her stout pony, or working hard with her needle, to supply

the many garments her young household required.

"They never thought of the rich prize so temptingly placed almost within reach. In fact, they had not time to do so, for, as is usually the case with that jade, Fortune, the less there was wherewith to feed them, the more mouths she sent.

"My mother bore my father five sons in six years, while our noble relative was pining his heart out for want of one.

"People pitied my father, when they saw five great rosy, healthy, sturdy boys, rush down to the wicket-gate, to try who could be the first to open it for him. They would have been amazed, had they looked into my father's heart, and seen it beat with pleasure to hear the voices so dear to him, rejoice in thankfulness that God had given him such treasures.

"You must know, Nest, that without any great conceit, I must allow we are a fine family, at which to look."

"Nay, Elmore, you need not call it conceit. I have seen two of your brothers, and if I had not seen you, I should have thought them superb specimens of the English race."

"Thank you, Nest, but my remark was only made to bring in a little sort of episode. You see, my mother; she is not tall, has nothing of what you may call the fine woman about her; which, by the by, is a most odious phrase, and puts me in mind of a butcher, speaking of a Smithfield ox—"

"Oh, cousin, don't."

"I grant, it is rather a vulgar remark; so to go on,—my mother is slight and well-made, with all the marks of gentle blood and good breeding about her. Though delicate-looking and refined, she is capable of enduring fatigue to an amount that would upset many a fine gentleman; she is like the thorough-bred horse—"

"Come, cousin, all your similes are in the cattle line."

"'Tis true, they are. That is entirely owing

to old Stewart, who wearies my life out with farming. However, Nest, what I mean to say is this: a man should be very careful whom he chooses for a wife, of what kind of family, of what principles; and as this remark will apply to some part of my history, I wish you to remember it. For our strong frames, our healthy bodies, we owe, in a great measure, to our parents; and I think it is of more importance to bequeath pure, unsullied, healthy blood to one's children, than any amount of riches. Look at your Franz."

"Yes, cousin, is he not beautiful? more like his father every day."

"He has your eyes, Nest; may he have your firm, devoted character."

"He has not had one day's illness since he was born, Elmore," continued Nest eagerly, to hide a sort of half-shudder that went through her frame.

"Nessie," said Elmore, softly, "I meant no reflections; believe me, out of my own family I

loved no one as I did our Frank. It very seldom occurs on earth that a nature so simple and open should greet one's sight. You saw his heart laid bare before you, with all its faults and virtues exposed to view; and when one comes to think, Nest, what mountains of hypocrisy there are in the world, it is as well to bless God for having once known a being so guileless as he was."

"It is that, cousin, which makes me feel how safe he is in his heavenly Father's arms. For you know, Elmore, if any thing untoward had occurred, if we had suffered any of the ills that we are all born to, such as loss of friends, children, or fortune, my Frank's nature would have suffered so much, that I might have had more to hold up against than I could well bear; and if it should have so chanced, Elmore, that any thing had happened to me—"

"Frank would have died with you, Nest. His spirit now watches you, gentle, fond wife, in gratitude that you led him to the fountain of

all good himself; and still more, that you have saved his mother. Ah! Nest, tell me, do you regret the price you have paid for that soul? Do you mourn your lonely life, and think how hard it was that you should lose 'the light of your eyes,' before you conquered that proud spirit?"

"If I dared murmur, cousin, I have but to look at mamma."

"True, you see your reward. And Mimi, dear Nest, you saved her."

"I shall never hear the end of your story, Elmore."

"I linger over it, Nest, because it is rather common-place, and as I go along to you, I like to deduce the experiences I have gained from it. Some day, you must get my mother to tell you of her life at Tregare. It was not the usual training to make a duchess. However, I know we were very happy. Nest, we lived near the sea. Like you, I looked upon that wondrous object of God's power, as my play-fellow. The wild waves

spoke to me, the never-ceasing murmurs reminded me of the never-ceasing prayers before the throne of God. I felt, when I looked into its calm, clear depths, so clear, so pure should my heart be; and when I watched its turbulent, stormy mood, I prayed God 'not to lead me into temptation,' but to 'deliver me from the evil of wayward passion.' The sea spoke thus to me, Nest, and the echo seems speaking on."

He paused, and his clear eyes were raised towards heaven.

Nest read in his expression, that rare sight, the adoration of a noble soul for its Creator. Her own thoughts followed his, and but for the sound of carriage wheels, they might have remained some time absorbed in this mute worship.

"Do you expect any one?" he asked.

"No," said Nest, "if they are visitors, mamma will send for me."

"Then until she does, I will proceed. My mother had one longing, for the gratification of

which she would have given up her chance of being a duchess; she wanted a little daughter. Handsome and bright as were her boys, her gentle nature panted for a little, loving, quiet girl. My youngest brother was now three years old. We became conscious that times were not favourable for farming; for some of our little luxuries, such as pots of cream, syllabub, and other childish delights, were ours no longer; neither had we new coats and hats, as was the usual habit of Christmas. We had seen our dear father once or twice look harassed, and upon several occasions I had gone messages, herded the cows, brought in the sheep, and done the work that usually belonged to the odd boy of the establishment. You smile, Nest; have I lowered myself in your estimation, by allowing that I once made a very decent sort of farmer's boy?"

"No, cousin, I like you the better. Only looking at you now, so ——."

"So what, Nest?"

"You know, Elmore, if all the Dukes in

England matched you, it would be a grand sight to see you altogether. I could not realise you, as any other than you are."

"Nevertheless, for some months I acted as farmer's boy to my father: and most fortunate for me it was so. For if it was not for the knowledge I then and there imbibed, old Stewart would be more tyrannical over me than he is now. But you will now understand, that my father and mother were, owing to circumstances I never heard, rather pinched for money.

"One evening, my brothers having gone to bed, and I only remaining, awaiting my turn, and while deeply absorbed in some childish history, I heard my father say—

"'I always meant to send Elmore to school, when eight years old.'

"'We cannot do so, this year, at all events,' answered my mother,—(my private ambition, Nest, was to go to school, so I listened).

"'There is no chance of the farm paying any thing this year,' said my father; 'it will be well

if we get all the food we require from it. I must sell the pony, love; hay is eight pounds a ton.'

" 'I shall not want him, Frederick,' said my mother, 'for I am sorry to say, I am about to add to your expenses.'

" My father looked up quickly, with a pleased countenance, and said, as he kissed her; 'Dear wife, as long as you give me such boys, I have but to thank God. By-and-bye, they will be a fortune in themselves.'

" 'Yes, by-and-bye; meantime, how must we clothe and feed them, Frederick?'

" 'God never sends a mouth, without the hands to feed it, wife. Your news has put me into spirits and heart again. I must now put my shoulder to the wheel, and really begin to work.'

" 'You do that already, more than I like, Frederick; but thank you, dear, for taking my news so kindly. I have been for some time half afraid to tell you.'

" This conversation made a great impression upon me, Nest. I understood enough to know,

that my father's unselfish nature rejoiced in what would have annoyed many other needy men; and early in the morning, I went down to my beloved, confiding sea, and imparted my hopes and wishes to its faithful bosom. The result was, that I begged my father to dismiss the odd boy altogether, and give me his place, and promised to drill my little brothers into first-rate poultry and pig boys, thereby saving another expense.

"We thus managed to struggle on without debt, and without want; though we might have suffered a few privations for four months; those blank months of winter and spring which have neither the usual quantity of active exercise, nor well-earned harvest, to rejoice one. In May, one real spring afternoon, my father said to me, 'Can you ride the young horse into town, Elmore, for the doctor to come and see your mother?' I answered, 'Yes,' with mixed feelings of gratification and pride, that I was so trusted. I brought back the doctor and the young horse in

safety.' (Nest, you see, I was early accustomed to think in such emergencies.)

"Ah, Elmore, dear Elmore, I know I owe my life, besides many other things to you," half whispered Nest.

"Nest, my life would be worth little to me, if—no, but let me proceed.

"In the evening, having endeavoured as much as possible to make up for my father's continued absence from his farm, I entered the house. The good doctor met me, and said, 'I have left a very happy mamma up stairs, with a pretty little sister by her side.'

"At this news, we all set up a shout of rejoicing, which was quickly stifled by the doctor.

"Nevertheless we could not restrain our joy, when my father came down. He looked as delighted as most fathers do, when they hear of the birth of a son and heir, and seeing our pleasure, he mounted the stairs again, and brought us down the precious little sister to see.

"But this day was remarkable for another

event. The post had come in, and the letters had remained, in these hours of anxiety, unopened and uncared for.

"Our boyish curiosity had been excited by one, sealed with a large seal of black wax, and a broad black edge; my father looked grave as he opened it. 'Your distant cousin, the Duke of Nairn, is dead, children; we are no longer poor. Say nothing of this to your mother, but bring me my writing-desk.' After he had written two or three letters, he desired me to give them to the ploughman, to take up that night, to the town. I looked at the directions, and saw that one was to a wine merchant, another to a vender of game, and a third to a confectioner. On the morrow came various luxuries and comforts, suited to my mother's state.

"In a week's time, she was strong and well. On the Sunday evening, they talked together of the name my little sister was to bear, and we were all consulted.

"We gave many, one finer than another; we thought no name too grand for this little sister.

"'No,' said my father, 'it must be a simple name, for there is Lady to be put before it. My love, perhaps you are now strong enough to learn that you are Duchess of Nairn.'

"'Oh,' said my mother, smiling, 'I have known that several days. Charley was playing with the black-edged envelope and the large seal, and on questioning him, he innocently said, 'Papa knows that our cousin, the Duke of Nairn, is dead, but mamma is not to know.' Besides, love, I should not have enjoyed all these luxuries with which you have surrounded me, had I not guessed the reason of their appearance. I have got my dear little girl, and to tell you the truth was so wrapt up in thankfulness for this sweet gift, I forgot the other.' 'Twas thus, Nest, that we heard of our relief from poverty, our lift in life. My father and mother evidently thought their precious girl, was the gift best worth hav-

ing. But see, your mother beckons to us, from her window."

Nest ran hastily in, and seeing unwonted agitation in Lady Jane's face, kissed her tears away, in her own sweet manner.

"Elmore has not gone, has he? I must consult him."

He came at her bidding, and they remained shut up, for some time.

Meanwhile, Nest learnt with surprise, that the carriage they had heard was a hired one, bringing from York a foreign lady, who was even then shut up in her mother's apartments.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE truth was soon known. It was the unhappy Augusta; and Lady Jane not only shrank from the sight of her, but could not bear to think that one so depraved and unrepentant, should pollute the pure presence of Nest. It was for this, she wished to consult the Duke.

"Perhaps, her arrival may prove providential, Jane; do not grieve thus. Perhaps our Nest may yet add this one more soul, to those she has already assisted."

"My Nest shall not see her," said Lady Jane; "you must take her away with you. No one

must deal with this unhappy creature but myself."

As Lady Jane would listen to no other arrangement, Nest, to please her, did as she wished.

"But, mother, I shall ride or drive over every day to see you."

Augusta had returned to her mother, from no other motive than her own selfish will. Lost to shame, unconscious of her fading health, she only thought of her own whims at the moment; and being sick and tired of the life she led at Madeira, necessarily retired, she thought only how to escape from it. No idea of her lost position in the world, deterred her. Her mother should receive her, whether she liked it or not.

"Your mother's health shall not be sacrificed, Nest," said Elmore, as they returned together to Nairn, little Franz sitting between them. "She must have Mimi to assist her."

"Mimi will not come to Gomer," answered Nest.

"I don't wonder at her. She and Count Orlando must be rather ashamed to look at the back stairs; but, Nest, she is coming to Nairn."

"Is she really?" said Nest, joyfully.

"Yes, she is going to honour our humble abode, at my mother's request; only I was to keep it a secret."

"Were you, indeed? I shall take care how I confide mine to you."

"I will be very scrupulous regarding yours, Nest, especially if they are love matters."

"It is useless my confiding to you the love I bear one young gentleman; you must know that secret already."

"How much does mamma love you, Franz?" said the Duke, smiling to the child.

"So much, that Franz sees it up in de sky, papa."

"Godpapa, my darling," said Nest.

"Nay, Nest, Frank gave you both to me. Let me think him my child."

"It sounded strange to me," said Nest, with tears.

The child put up his hand, as if to wipe them away.

"Granny says, papa went away to Heaven, to be God's child; but you will be papa to Franz, on earth."

"I will, my boy."

"See, see, mamma, pretty aunt Mimi!"

"There, Nest, I kept half my secret. My business at Gomer to-day, was to entice you both back to Nairn, to meet the Countess Orlando; but somehow I forgot my business, and then Augusta's arrival prevented Lady Jane's company. His Countship is away, poking about some manufactories in Manchester."

Mimi and Nest so set off each other, in their warm sisterly love, and beautiful contrast, that no sight could be prettier than the two together.

"My Nest, how well you look," exclaimed Mimi; "almost like yourself; but where is mamma?"

The cause was explained.

"To-morrow," said Mimi, "I will go with you, Nest, not only to see my mother, but to share with her, the care of my sister."

"Remember what she is, Mimi; your husband may not like it," said the Duke.

"My husband," retorted Mimi, with great emphasis, "expects his wife to do her duty. Augusta is my sister; if she wants them, she is entitled to my sisterly attentions."

"Good Mimi! really, mother, the Count and Countess Orlando seem delightful people."

"Cousin! you are as foolish as ever. I really thought Mr. Stewart, and old age combined, would have made you, by this time, a sensible person. You are incorrigible."

"Ah, Mimi, that is your fault, and if you will come with me, I will explain the reason thereof."

But instead of making any explanation, when they were alone, he said, "How do you think she looks?"

"Your mother?" said Mimi, maliciously; "never better."

"Come now, that is very fair revenge, Mimi, so let us talk rationally. I thank God my dear mother is well. If she had but a daughter now, Mimi—"

"Yes, just like Nest, cousin, who could be your wife as well—"

"Most true, Mimi; would to God I knew if such happiness could be mine!"

"I wish I could help you, dear cousin; but I can only say, Nest would not consent to marry you, if she did not love you."

"My dear child, I know that better than you; neither would I have her, without her heart. She is so sensitive, she may have a horror of marrying again."

"Well, cousin, one thing I must say, and that is, though Nest is sensitive, she is sensible, and she must have seen, ere our Frank left us, that he would not have been the husband of her choice, had she been older, and mixed more

with the world. She was devoted, but not blind. Though her loyal wife's heart would not, even to herself, admit such a thing, yet I am sure, ere she had been married three months, she must have seen that she was to lead, and not follow. Now, to a nature like Nest's, so womanly, such a state of things must have been a perpetual blister."

"I agree with you, Mimi, she has a true woman's heart. It was that which made her so sweet and engaging in my eyes. Perhaps to that, I may owe her love at last. Her distress and repugnance at going about the world, with no legitimate guardian, no manly arm to do her the kind offices only such a guardian can give, may work in my favour. Then, Mimi, you shall see how a husband can love!"

"As if I did not know that already, you conceited Elmore!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE first, the only sign that Augusta gave of contrition and remorse, was caused by her sister.

She had seen her last, in that wretched, miserable, forlorn state, just before she eloped. She beheld her now, not only blooming and beautiful, but so graceful, so easy, so refined in every movement and action, that as Augusta caught a glimpse of herself and sister in the large pier-glass, an irrepressible cry of anguish and dismay escaped from her lips.

Mimi understood it well; and from no unkind

feeling, with no exultation, but with rather the humility and gratitude of a repentant child, she spoke thus to her sister :—

"Yes, Augusta, look at us two, my mother's only daughters; you, petted and beloved, beautiful and admired; I, not even gifted with a ray of affection to induce me to become any other than I was, a rude, uncouth, passionate hoyden. In contrasting my former state with my present one, I do so with the humblest gratitude, knowing that I owe nothing of it to myself. But, Augusta, you had every advantage that I wanted; and though you may rightly impute some of your misfortunes to our mother's weak indulgence to you, and faulty education, you cannot do so now. In your heart, you must acknowledge, she has done all she can to repair her errors. Therefore, you can expect no change for good to take place in you, while you bear in your bosom a heart so hard and selfish towards her. Look at us both; do you see how ill-temper, and violent

passion have robbed you of the beauty of which you were once so vain. Who loves you? who looks up to you? who cares whether you are pleased or angry? I felt like you once, abject, mean, degraded. Now, my thoughts are queen-like, my hopes beyond the confines of earth, my happiness as boundless! Sister, be good, be pitiful towards our mother; I ask no more, at present."

"She is the origin of all my misfortunes," murmured Augusta, still weeping passionately.

"The more magnanimous in you to forget it, though, in truth, it is not so; our mother was proud and cold, she never was——you know what I mean, sister."

"That was my husband's fault, he hated me!"

"He was very wicked. Poor Augusta, how I pity you!"

"Oh! Mimi, I am wretched and miserable, and very wicked! If I might go home with you, I would try to be better. But my mother,

her very look irritates me! and that sanctified, calm Lady Gomer seems to mock me; your words cut me to the heart, but there seems something so frank and free in them, no cant, no—"

"I will ask Hugh; I should like to have you, sister; but I will have you behave well to mamma. As to Nest, you will not see her again, though if I do you any good, you will owe it to her."

"Those people, with whom my mother placed me, drove me away by their perpetual sermons and preachings."

"I will not preach to you; but if you do anything I think wrong, I shall say so, at once."

Though no difficulty was made by Mr. Leonard, in furtherance of Augusta's wishes, Lady Jane was greatly averse to it.

"Why should I, my Mimi, shrink from the task I prepared with my hands? why should such a trial be put upon you, my good and dutiful child?"

"Because, mamma, I owe you a debt of duty. I hated you once most cordially, and ran away with Hugh, solely because I thought nothing could mortify you more. Besides, dear mamma, I shall do Augusta more good than any one. Her pride is roused to see the sister she so despised, very much superior to herself. Don't think me vain, dear mamma, but it is all Hugh's fault. He thinks me so clever too!" and she laughed a sweet, ringing laugh, that sounded like music to her mother's ears.

"My happy, merry darling!"

"Yes, mamma, all owing to you, for you know, you made me marry Hugh; but to go on with Augusta. She knows she is very wicked, and she is setting her heart against all attempts at amendment, just out of hardness. Now, mamma, I mean to shame her into something like remorse and contrition. Nest saved you and me, I will save Augusta; and then I shall earn my mother's blessing."

"Bless you, my Mimi."

"Thanks, mamma. Hugh is as interested as I am, and if we 'Save a soul alive,' think, mother, of the reward, we shall 'cover a multitude of sins.'"

"I am interested too, Mimi, in more ways than one. If Elmore succeeds in winning my Nest, she will leave me less unwillingly, if I have a dutiful child to live with me."

"Mamma, Augusta's health; we should consult Dr. M. I much fear it is completely broken."

"I will send for him, love. If she returns with you, it will but be right, that you should know the exact truth, while, for Augusta's sake, it is equally necessary."

CHAPTER XIX.

"How grave Elmore looks," said Mimi, one day.

"How can I look otherwise, Mimi, when I see that all my boasted attractions are snuffed out, like the veriest dip of a candle, by the page of the back-stairs? If you had only waited, child, I was on the eve of proposing, and then I should not have been the wretched, lonely, solitary, cross old bachelor, that I am now."

"Indeed, you are very confident. I would not have accepted you, cousin."

"I really believe it, Mimi. I am beginning

to think no one loves me but my poor old fond mother."

"Now, cousin, how can you teaze one? You know, I would not have dared to love you, or be your wife, because you are so superior; and I am, after all, nothing but poor little Mimi."

"Look at the Count's eyes, Mimi," whispered the Duke. "Do you think I shall ever be able to send such a speaking, but mute message, to one I love?"

"I hope so, dear, dearest cousin," answered Mimi, glancing at Nest.

Nest was visibly blushing, though apparently unheeding them.

"I shall be sorry to lose you and the Count, Mimi, though the sight of so much domestic felicity does not agree with my temper. I have half a mind to take my stand on some back-stairs."

"Hush, cousin!"

"What, does the Count like no allusion—"

"On the contrary, he says, whenever he builds a house, all the stairs shall be back ones. But

it is time I went to see about our packing, for we start early to-morrow."

"Then while you are away, I shall get Nest to walk with me on the terrace."

"Thank you, Elmore," answered Nest; "I wished to hear the end of the tale you half told me—

"Well, cousin!" she continued, as he paced once or twice up and down, and still did not speak.

"I was thinking, Nest, how much love gilds life. After all, there can be no state like the matrimonial one for happiness, as well as for the fulfilling our daily duties. An unmarried man is selfish, opiniated, has harsh judgment, and is moved by nothing but the loss of his dinner, or the fear of getting into a train where there is a baby. He was once a baby himself, and very likely a most squalling, obnoxious baby. And an unmarried woman is a very painful sight, too. She has to go about the world by herself. If she is strong-minded, she boasts of her independence,

and glories in her emancipation. If she is weak-minded, she stays moping at home, fearing it is wrong to take the escort of such an one, lest people should talk, and all sorts of namby-pamby nonsense. Now which do you mean to be, Nest, of these two characters?"

"If you will go on with your own history, cousin, I will then answer you."

"Very well."

THE CONTINUATION OF THE DUKE'S STORY.

"You will judge, Nest, that though prosperity is supposed to be harder for weak heads to bear than adversity, yet that my father and mother were somewhat exceptions to the rule.

"That is, you will judge so, from the indifference with which they regarded gifts of life, usually most deeply prized. But I presume they must have had some little weak corner in their hearts, or perhaps ingratitude for such munificent blessings, may have brought on the only misfortune they ever experienced. But it was

a misfortune my mother has never ceased regretting.

"Hardly were we all settled at Nairn, hardly had we experienced the pleasure of knowing how welcome we were, not only to our own people, but our neighbours—hardly had my father entered into all his schemes of reform and management—hardly had my mother become accustomed to be treated as a great lady, than, for the first time in their household, sickness visited us.

"We all had the measles, en masse. I do not take upon myself to say, that my mother could or would have chosen which of her children should be spared on earth, or which sent to begin her family in heaven; but the remembrance of her bitter grief, at first seeing the pet boy, Charley, placed in his little coffin, which had, ere closed, to be made wider to admit the idolized little daughter, never left my remembrance. It grew into my heart, that one of the purposes of my life should be, to give her a daughter, who should cheer her declining days, love her fondly,

dearly, rule me with silken cobwebs, by her devotion to my mother; make up, in short, for that wild, bitter hour of sorrow, to which even her pious heart abandoned itself. Say, Nest, do you think this was a wild boy's-dream, or was it the thought of a man who knew his hope would be realized?"

"To be realized, cousin, dear cousin? Ah! why not before now?"

"Because, Nest, but twice have I seen the daughter I would like to give my mother. 'Twas on this wise I beheld the first one:

"I was nineteen years old, perhaps more. My father was pleased to say, I realized all his hopes, as regarded honours, and degrees, and such like things, that one can pick up in this world, if one tries. My mother would whisper, when I was by her side, she forgot her one woe.

"It was lovely summer weather, and I had gone out early in the morning to fish. I always loved, Nest, to see the sun rise. His glory reminded one, to act throughout the day as became

the recipient of so much beauty, while it also said, 'Be not proud, poor worm; he shines for the daisy, as for thyself.'

"I rested from my enticing sport, when he, in the fulness of his pride and power, drove all nature to the cool shades, and thereby sent even the little fishes darting about in their pellucid element, to the shelter of some well-known nook.

"I presume I fell asleep, but I was awakened by voices.

"Sweet, feminine voices, and ringing laughter, made me crouch lower under my canopy of leaves.

"They appeared in sight, on the opposite side of the stream.

"'How are we to cross?' said one.

"'Oh! no one is here, let us take off our shoes and stockings, and wade through.'

"Now, in honour, I ought to have shewn myself, but my honour only bid me hide closer, and not look.

"But another voice spoke, low and musical,

'It is so lovely here, I think I shall remain this side.'

"'So like you, Angela,' said one of the others; 'you would rather dream here by the water than enter into any of our frolics.'

"'Nay, I will come, rather than you should think so,' said the sweet voice

"A wish to see her face, and perhaps the thought that I might be of use, now made me spring up.

"I waded through the stream, and approached them, taking as little notice of their surprise at my sudden appearance as I could. I offered, in the most common-place terms, to carry them across; they blushed, and hesitated. I then suggested, that a little lower down, the stream was so shallow, with the help of a few stones, they could cross dry-shod.

"To this they consented. During the operation of making a temporary bridge, and in handing them across, we became very good friends.

"It was only, Nest, when assisting Angela, over, that I looked to see if her face suited her voice.

"She seemed to me like a little violet, that though hardly visible, embosomed in broad shading leaves, yet sheds a fragrance and beauty around the place that she dwells, like no other flower.

"Having learnt that their object was to visit the old yew trees, under which the monks of old were supposed to have lived, while their abbey was building, I offered to be their guide. More especially as they would again have to encounter their enemy, the stream.

"There were three of them; Mary, Ellen, and Angela. They were merry, unaffected, and sociable. Angela said least; but her eyes always spoke.

"I learnt that they had but lately come to live in that part of the world, and that they had a father and mother, and their house was within five miles of Nairn. We grew so intimate ere

we parted, that, on their saying how their mo-
their would delight in having some of my trout,
I strung them each two, on a little twig, and
laughing with pleasure, they went their way.

"I told my mother about them. And she
called, as did my father.

"She said, she liked the family, and admired
my Angela.

"He said, they seemed amiable people, but
looked sickly.

"Now, my father, accustomed to his great
strong sons, and judging that all women ought
to be healthy, like my mother, had imbibed a
contempt for sickly people. Everybody has
their weakness. So the intimacy of the family
rested on my mother and me; but even she did
not know what draughts of love I was drinking
in from the violet eyes of my Angela.

"It seemed to me, so shrinking and modest
was she, that not even her own family guessed
what a treasure they possessed. And I thought
to myself, I would be the sheltering oak under

which my little violet should nestle. She was the gentle, loving daughter I wanted for my mother. For, unobtrusive and retiring, she yet seemed to be always conscious when her mother moved, and what she wanted. Mrs. Blair was an invalid, not often seen, and even then almost always on the sofa.

"Not to tire you, Nest, I loved, and was loved again. Angela seemed to me, a woman made on purpose for my mother and me. She was so feminine, so peculiarly womanly in everything. At this distance of time, I doubt if she was clever. I know for certain, she was not firm in character. For that latter failing, I, perhaps, liked her the better. I forgot to compare her with my mother. Ah! Nest, in other ways I have learned to think a woman may be firm, even to emulate the stoicism of a Spartan, and yet be more feminine and lovely in my eyes than ever. You may believe that with such parents as mine, they knew almost as soon as myself, that I had given and exchanged vows of love.

But with whatever feelings my mother may have heard it, the news came as a disagreeable shock to my father."

"'Good heavens, Elmore! it cannot, must not be. Nay, boy, forgive me,' he continued, seeing how disturbed I looked, 'your news has taken me by surprize had I guessed—had I known; —I would have warned you. But with your mother before you, I never thought to teach my sons whom to select as wives.'

"'Father,' I answered, "I have asked, and been accepted. I will not marry without your consent, as you know; but I must hold myself engaged to Angela Baird, whatever objections you may have.

"'Her station and rank, my dear husband,' pleaded my mother, 'would not have been beneath Elmore's.'

"'Beneath his! my dear wife, impute not to me any notions of pride and arrogance. No, the lowliest gentlewoman in England is welcome to marry my son, provided she brings health and

worth into our family. Of the latter I give their full meed to the Bairds; but to the former, surely you must know that more than half the family have died of consumption, that they only keep these three girls alive by the greatest care, and that Mrs. Baird is slowly sinking under an incurable and hereditary disease, as painful as it is shocking?'

"'Who told you this, Frederick?'

"'Dr. M., who is in attendance upon her. He, probably, heard some report about Elmore, and gave me warning.'

"'Still, Frederick, in honour, Elmore cannot retract, on such a plea.'

"Neither would I do so," I said. "To me, Nest, it appeared that the very notion of this unseen evil hanging about my Angela, only made me love her the more; and I felt such strong devotion in my heart, such a purpose in my soul, that it seemed to me, she had only to become my wife, and I would so guard her, so watch, so encircle her with love, the angel of

death would not come near her. In pity for such devotion, he would require us both at the same moment.

"My father only said in addition, 'If it had been any other son than Elmore, I should not have said as much; but to transmit to the noble name we inherit, a sickly, consumptive race, instead of my fine, manly boys, is painful to me. Nevertheless, he must fulfil his engagement; but as the lady is so young, and he not of age, they must wait the occurrence of the latter event, ere they marry.'

"So, Nest, I spent eighteen months in happy courtship; and the time seemed as nothing, for the love I bore my Angela. Fostered by such affection as mine, she bloomed into lovely flower; no imprudence was suffered, no risk was run, nothing that could sow seed for any future ill.

"Even the good doctor had nothing to say; he could only compliment her on her beauty and bloom.

"That some things occurred during these halcyon days, not altogether free from annoyances, you will believe, Nest. To you, it is unnecessary to relate, how the cup of bliss, presented to the eager lip, now and then turns bitter to the taste, But the annoyances arose not with my Angela. On the contrary, they drew out the extreme beauty of her character more and more. And, Nest, to show you that I was not blinded by love, my mother was equally charmed. The first trouble arose from Mrs. Baird's illness. Though sweet, amiable, and gentle, her long illness had made her somewhat selfish, and during her hours of pain and suffering, she was wont to consider that each period would prove her last. Then, in her devoted love and affection for her husband and children, she could not bear them from her sight; but, in tender pity and sympathy, they must hang over and about her, so that she might expire with all she loved in sight. Would you do thus, Nest?"

"No, Elmore; to tender, loving hearts, the fear of the separation is enough, without the pain of seeing the mortal struggle between life and death."

"We think alike, Nest; the case is different where the survivor has strength and nerve enough to perform the last duties, and finds consolation therefrom. But in these tender-hearted girls, with nerves so finely strung, with constitutions so delicately framed, it was a constant struggle; and I am sorry to say, I caught myself more than once thinking it was a matter of regret the poor sufferer was not released, and found it very difficult to enter into the tearful joy and gratitude of the poor girls, when their mother returned again to them, as it were, from the jaws of death. You will not think well of me for this, Nest; but you may believe I was well tried, ere I did think so."

"Yes, cousin, I can believe it, and then you had such a stake depending upon the result."

"I made as much use of my right over An-

gela as I could, to guard her from the worst consequences; and however her feelings might be tried, her health, as I said before, was all that we could wish.

"But Mary, having no divided interest in her heart, no watchful lover to take care she took air and exercise, and had some other occupation than brooding over the ills that God had sent, became, what I can call nothing less than a victim to her mother's want of judgment and common sense. They were very much alike in their sweet, simple character, their unselfish, unsophistical nature, the three sisters; but there was a depth of quiet beauty in Angela's character, that neither of the others possessed. Equally warm-hearted and tender, these feelings showed themselves in Mary, in a most inconvenient and troublesome form. If either of her sisters went out, she tormented herself and them with wondering if it were safe? if the wind were east? if it were likely to rain? Say the question was happily settled, the day, the hour, the wind

unexceptionable, another question rose, vexed into little shreds of torments. Was the dress worn, warm or cool enough? would not he or she have something else? could she not run, lend, send, in short, do any thing, but suffer the person going out, to go in peace. At meals I will venture to say, neither father nor sisters ate any thing, that she did not hope, fear, wish and dread all sorts of consequences from the food they were eating. With an anxious look, and a careworn brow, she began at breakfast to wonder what would be most prudent and proper for them to have for dinner. There was no selfishness in all this, tiresome as it was; for I am satisfied, if she could have been certain that those she loved so much, were in no danger of taking cold, and might eat what was before them with impunity, she would have stood out herself in a thunder-shower, and eaten stewed alligator, without thinking either would harm her.

"In fact, from the time you came into the room until you left, Mary was miserable about

you; and unluckily, numbers never saved you. You must be too hot or too cold, or sitting in a draught, and to please her and gain peace, you would change your place; then some one else was too hot or too cold, and they must change; so that altogether the party never would have sat still five minutes, had Mary had her own way. I am bitter about her, Nest, much more so now, thinking of these facts, than I was then. For she was a sweet, loveable creature, and one could not look into her soft, beseeching eyes, and listen to her gentle entreaties, without doing all she asked, whether convenient or not. Ellen had not Mary's fidgetiness—she was, of all the three sisters, the most delicate; and this gave a languor and indolence, in all she did, that made her appear of less consequence to the family, than she was. In fact, two Marys would have been too much for one family. They would then have had to lock themselves up in golden lockers, and only peep out on Sundays, that people might glance at such precious things. But it is ill

jesting. I prose on, warring off the catastrophe, not because, Nest, I mourn still for my Angela; God knows my father's words have often returned to me; I bless God for my lot.

"Now, among the three sisters, Angela shone in this way. She was as loving and anxious as Mary, but she acted her thoughts, and never said them. By intuition, she knew which window made a draught. It was quietly shut. By a look at the sky, she could say if her mother might venture out, and brought her wraps and ordered her chair, before Mary had had time to think even of the event. By the touch of her father's hand, she could judge if he was weary and low, (and often he was so, poor man! for strong, hale, and robust, he ever bore in his heart the vision of a childless, lonely fireside); she sang merry songs, chattered and laughed, until she charmed the dark mood away. There was, in short, some peculiar power in her, that made her know what you wished, say what you were thinking on, do what you were desiring.

In the two years that I knew her, she did but two things with which I could find fault; and that, let me tell you, Nest, is high praise for a weak mortal. Who can hope to be so perfect?"

"It is true," said Nest; "and one of those two things I can guess, Elmore; she died."

"Yes, you are right; but the manner of her death was so horrible."

"Then tell me no more, Elmore; not for my idle curiosity shall such scenes be recalled."

"Nay, I would rather tell you all. You must know that what with Mary's constant fears and anxieties, with Ellen's more quiet, but not the less dolorous view of the case, I had begun to look upon Mrs. Baird's attacks as species of myths. Every two or three weeks, I heard she was dying, but she did not die; she invariably recovered to her former state. So, just as I was preparing for my majority, and the sweet happiness that was to follow, she really did die.

"I know not if her daughters had from

custom grown into the same thought as I had; but to judge from the shock it was to them, I imagine they must have held some such idea. So far from her constant attacks preparing them (I speak now only of Mary and Ellen, for my Angela was more reasonable); so far from feeling her sufferings were ended, and her bliss begun; so far from entertaining in any way their loss as a fiat from the hand of God, their grief was as passionate and boundless as it was unreasonable.

"They ought to have thanked God, as their poor father did, for taking one heavily burdened as Lazarus to his bosom. For eighteen years she had been slowly dying, of the most painful and distressing of all human maladies; and they murmured thereat.

"Out of respect, I, as an intended son, and my father, because he was my father, and all that I loved he was interested in, went to attend the funeral.

"To my infinite dismay, I am afraid I must

allow disgust, I found the three sisters intended following their mother's remains to their last resting-place.

"As my Angela lay weeping in my arms, looking so ethereal and fragile, in her crape wrappings, I implored her to leave me to represent her, in this solemn duty. The day was wet and stormy, sleet and hail even then rattling against the windows.

"'Nay, I must forgive her; I must not refuse her. It was the last token of love she could pay her dear mother.'

"'But, Angela, our hearts are one; will not mine suffice to mourn for you?'

"'Yes, yes, more than enough; but Mary would break her heart ——'

"'Let me reason with her; surely my Angela does not wish to parade her grief, so true, so pious, to the world?'

"'No, no, Elmore, you are right, it is true; alone in my chamber I could follow her in spirit, and be more resigned.'

"But it was in vain I reasoned with either Mary or Ellen. They had no reason left; I called on their father to forbid them, so excited and overcome, undergoing such a public display.

"'No, he would not interfere; he wished them to please themselves.'

"They went in the pouring, driving rain; they knelt by the side of their mother's grave, too absorbed in their grief, to heed ought. With cries and sobs too hysterical to be repressed, Mary drowned the voice of the clergyman, so that no one could hear the blessed words, 'I am the resurrection and the life.'

"The grave was very deep; Mr. Baird had seemed to think three other coffins would be placed there, ere he should be himself at rest. As the first spadeful of earth was thrown on the coffin, sounding all hollow and sepulchral from the depth, Mary shrieked, and threw herself forward.

"And now, Nest, neither I nor any one present knew how it occurred. Either the sides of the

grave gave way, or Mary, in her temporary deprivation of sense, threw herself in; but from some cause, she fell into the grave, and my Angela catching hold of her sister, as it seemed, to save her, overpowered by the weight, fell with her, and the earth crumbled over them both, as they lay together on their mother's coffin."

"Ah, Elmore, cousin, dearest cousin!" exclaimed Nest, unable to say more, yet unable to repress her emotion. She pressed the arm she held close to her beating heart, as if to show its sympathy, and she put her other hand into his with confiding affection, the more touching, from the rarity of such acts on her part.

The colour bright and clear went over face and brow, even to the ivory head, tinging the fair, crisp curls with its ruddy hue. He clasped the little hand close, and, as if that was sufficient to calm him, he proceeded.

"I carried my Angela home. Doctor M. was, of course, in attendance, at the funeral. Mary's apparently more serious hurts were to be first at-

tended to. I believe a bone was broken, leg or arm, and she was seriously bruised, I also think. I do not, however, remember much about it.

" My Angela had apparently fainted, but her eyes were open and fixed. We searched diligently for bruise or wound. We could find no hurt. Yet, spite of all our endeavours, all our remedies, she remained unconscious.

" My father, in alarm, requested Doctor M. to come to her as soon as possible; and until then, he advised her to be placed in bed, released from her day garments, and kept as cool and airy as possible. Unable to do more for her, he devoted himself to me.

" For many hours (to me it seemed days) was Doctor M. employed trying to bring my Angela back to consciousness; and when, exhausted and perplexed, he at last joined us, it was evident his fears preponderated over his hopes.

" 'Mary will do well,' he said, 'but Angela's state I cannot account for. I cannot find even so much as a bruise, to warrant the state she is

now in. It must have been the shock. On such a sensitive nature, the horror of such an accident has been too much for her, and no art that I can use seems to have power to break the spell.'

"'What then would you advise?' said my father.

"'Lord Elmore has suffered enough already, I can see; but nevertheless I can only hope to rouse her, by the employment of some other strong feeling.'

"'I understand,' I answered calmly. 'You wish me to try, if I can, through her love for me, create some emotion in her heart.'

"'Exactly so; I want her circulation restored, and the fixed state of the eyes relieved, before I can hope to do her any good. If she remains much longer as she is now, she must die.'

"Sending all the domestics away, he and I alone entered the chamber where my Angela lay, cold and motionless, on her little couch. I knelt down by her maiden bed, I took in my arms that slight form, clad in its pure white

night-dress, and pressed it close to my beating heart. I poured on her brow and lips the kisses that fond husbands give to idolized wives, and spoke the passionate words of love, that such husbands breathe but to one ear. Such kisses, such words I had pictured to myself I would give, would speak, on the happy day that made her my own; but never before. For, Nest, I had never raised, though so long our courtship, on my Angela's cheek, any blush but an innocent one of pleasure. I had lightly touched her hand and cheek with my lips, just such a touch as the snow-flake would have given; but no open mark of my passionate love had ever yet startled her girlish purity. For my love was so holy. But now I was to use all my art to win back a spirit abruptly driven from its frail dwelling.

"I felt a slight tremor running through the little delicate frame; I redoubled my efforts; like a far-off sound, floating in air, I heard my name.

"'Yes, my Angela, my wife; it is your hus-

band thus holding you, thus adoring you, your Elmore.'

"The eyelids quivered, drooped; from beneath came large tears.

"A few spasms of the throat, and then the sighing voice said,

"'I thought I went alive into the tomb.'

"'You are here, love, in my arms, my wife, my Angela.'

"The sweet lips trembled with a smile of fitful happiness.

"'Make her take this,' said Dr. M.

"I held the cordial to her lips, calling her every fond name I could think of.

"She swallowed a little, with effort enough almost to bring on convulsions. When somewhat recovered, she opened her eyes, and looked at me.

"'I disobeyed you once, Elmore, for the first, last time.'

"I could but kiss and soothe her.

"'I thought I was dead; but your voice recalled me; I want your forgiveness.'

"She had it, with a thousand kisses.

"'You will remember how I loved you; half way to Heaven, yet I came back for your blessing.'

"In pity to me, Dr. M. came forward.

"'Nay, Angela, take heart; you will do well now.'

"She kept her eyes fixed on me; she never heeded him.

"'She must be roused, she must not sink again into unconsciousness.'

"As he spoke these words, she laid her head on my bosom, she folded her hands over her heart, and saying in a clear, soft voice, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth,' her gentle spirit fled. My Angela left me. And within the week, she lay dead in the grave, which had received her living. As she laid herself down in my arms, so was she placed in her coffin, the little crossed

hands over the affrighted, startled heart; and I was alone."

"Dearest Elmore!" whispered Nest, her eyes overflowing.

"Nevertheless, God was very good to me; though how much so, I only knew when I was abroad this last time. I met Mr. Baird at Rome. Grief had done what ill health could not do. He was an old white-headed, sorrow-stricken man. Already had he laid the second coffin upon that of his wife's. Ellen had died six months before. I wished to go home with him, but he would not suffer me, and I soon discovered the cause. Mary was slowly dying of the same disease that killed her mother. When I madly asked God, why he took my Angela, and spared Mary, I little guessed from what she had been saved. The blow received in that dreadful fall, at first so little heeded, from the more serious injuries, was now teaching Mary the lesson she ought to have known before. And in her hours of pain and anguish, I doubt

not, for the good of her soul, came back the remembrance of her bitter murmurings at God's will, and of the selfish, unkind wish, to keep her mother bound to such agony, rather than see the mercy that freed her.

"So I thanked God heartily, not so much that I was spared a life like Mr. Baird's, but that Angela had gone, as it were in one moment, to heaven, neither burdened with suffering herself, nor having transmitted a portion of her delicate frame to tender little beings, who might have lived to curse the authors of their being."

"And the Bairds now, cousin?"

"The grave is filled, Nest. Mr. Baird was laid there, when you were last at Coadmore, the four coffins he had anticipated being beneath him."

"But, cousin, twice you have seen her whom you could love."

"Hah! I am glad to see you have a weakness of Mother Eve's, Nest."

"Because I wish your happiness—your—"

"I went abroad this last time, Nest," said Elmore, seeing she paused, "because I had again seen her whom I should have liked to have given my mother for a daughter."

"Why did that banish you?"

"Because she could be my mother's daughter, but not my wife; and I went away, to cure my heart of the wound."

"Ah, Elmore, she did not know you, as we do. What could she mean by refusing such a gift as your heart?"

"I did not ask her, Nest. She has been married before. I feared she might be angry and hurt, if I asked her to forget her first love, and take me."

"Is that why you have asked me so often, Elmore, about second love?"

"It is, Nest."

"It seems hard that a heart like yours, so loving, so noble, should fail to meet with an

answer, Elmore. Does she know your story? if she did—"

"Nay, Nest, would you have her accept me from pity? Though pity is akin to love, I must have her heart freely, frankly given me. My love is worth it."

"If she is worth your love, Elmore, she will give you her heart, even as you give yours."

"But, if I presumed to ask, and her sensitive nature, revolting from a second marriage, should turn from me altogether—"

"Nay, then would she clearly be not worth caring for. I would not be so scrupulous, cousin. If she is young, (she must be), it may so happen, that her first choice would not have been that of her more mature judgment."

As Nest thus spoke, Elmore suddenly left her side, and springing over the terrace wall, he descended the steep and somewhat perilous embankment, with bounds and agility more befitting a chamois hunter, than an English noble-

man. Then turning round, when he reached the bottom, he sprung over the ha-ha, and approaching the terrace-steps, ascended them, joining Nest again, with a glow over his whole countenance.

"Pardon me, Nest," he said, as he met her inquiring eyes; "I was fulfilling a promise I made to Lady Jane."

"What! by jumping over the terrace wall?"

"No, no," he exclaimed, laughing; "but now pray don't let me detain you any longer. Mimi must have finished her packing, and she will be indignant with me, if I monopolize too much of your company. I suppose you have heard Dr. M.'s opinion of Augusta."

"Yes, it is unfavourable; but if ought is to do her good, it will be the sea-air, he says."

"And if ought can do her mind good, it will be the intercourse with her sister."

"'Tis true; how she seems to cling to that once little, despised sister."

"Mimi is so truthful, yet so kind; she car-

ries conviction and love together in both hands. And the Count!" continued he, "who can love as he does? His devotion puts our commonplace, phlegmatic, John-Bull love, quite to the blush."

CHAPTER XX.

NEST found that Mimi's packing had been completed some time.

"Why did you not join us, dear, on the terrace?" she asked.

"Because I looked out, and saw Elmore so excited, and you so tearful, I dare not for my life have intruded."

"Nonsense, you silly Mimi."

"And you put your hand into his, and he kissed yours; really I was almost in tears myself, 'twas such a moving scene."

"You little absurd thing; but now listen,

only think what I was hearing, and you will but be too sorry you did not join us. Elmore was telling me that history you so much wished to know, the one you tried to get my aunt and Stewart to tell you."

"About his first love? It must have been a moving story, to judge by your looks. For my part, however she died, I don't think I should have cared."

"Mimi, you little monster!"

"The fact is, I have heard the story from my aunt; and though I have no doubt Angela was the dearest, loveliest little darling in the world, yet, yet—"

"Yet what, Mimi?"

"I am glad she is dead; and my aunt, in her kind way, says, 'My Elmore must have had an anxious life, had he married her;' which is as good as saying she is glad too."

"But, Mimi, a death so horrible—"

"I grant it was. The shock killed her, in reality; but it sounds very like as if she had

fallen in and broken her neck, which is unromantic—"

"You are the most heartless, wicked little thing I ever met with, and I am very glad you did not join us. Such a sad story, told in poor Elmore's way, would have been wasted upon you."

"Yes, because all the time, I should have been thinking how one could make up to him for such sorrow."

"Who is this lady, this other lady, Mimi, who might do this?"

"Oh! I know her well; but she is a hard-hearted creature. I know she thinks it shocking for people to marry twice, and rather than offend the world by a sense of her inconstancy, she will reject Elmore's noble heart and love, and go walking through the world, all alone in her immaculate goodness and uprightness, and the end of it will be, that I shall hate her."

"Mimi, you do not know what you are talking about. Perhaps she does not know,

perhaps her husband made her promise, perhaps she thinks Elmore's love ought to have a first love."

"Perhaps nothing of the sort, so you need not 'perhaps' any more; you know you are just of the same disposition, and would do just as she does, and that dearest, best, most darling Elmore must go on living, with no one to love or care for him."

"Child, you are quite absurd! and why you stream over poor me, such a torrent of strange accusations, I cannot tell."

"Neither can I, Nest, so don't be angry. Only I am disappointed."

"About what, you inexplicable Mimi?"

"How could I help being disappointed, sitting here for nearly an hour, by myself, and thinking that you two were speaking—were talking—that is to say, I never thought you were listening to that horrible story?"

"As you were spared the hearing, I cannot think why you should be so cross!"

"Ah, Nest, I am going to leave you; that always makes me cross."

"What! when you have Hugh with you?"

"Hugh is not you, Nest. Now, you will not forget your promise."

"To be godmother, Mimi?"

"Yes," said Mimi, blushing; "you are to stand at the font yourself, and Elmore will too; mamma asked him for me. He is always so wicked and naughty, in his remarks, I did not like to ask him myself. And really it was lucky I did not do so, for he asked mamma if the child would resemble a gipsy or a Saxon? as it would all depend upon that."

"If I had been mamma, I should have answered, Mimi, 'both;' and then he would have been rightly served, because he would have had no escape."

"Mamma did say both; and what do you think he said, 'Oh! she expects twins, does she?' If I had been present, I must have

pinched him, or done something very outrageous."

"Perhaps, Mimi, you may have a child with one blue and one black eye, like the cat—"

"More 'perhapses,' Nest; you shall not be godmother; and if you are, I hope your godchild will be pie-bald, fair and dark!"

"I shall love him all the same, if he is your child, Mimi."

"Thank you, Nest; I have an idea he will be like Hugh, so he cannot be a monster!"

"I have an idea it will be a little girl, like you; but, Mimi, I don't like your having the sole care of Augusta, in your present state. I fear it will be too much for you—"

"Not at all, Nest; besides, do you not see, she has a sort of horror of everybody, but me. Poor, dear mamma she only just tolerates, because I insist upon it; and you—"

"Yes, Mimi, she hates! and it is this, which makes me suffer you to be burdened with her

alone! I would not be in the way of your sisterly efforts."

"The fact is, she has some feelings of womanhood left, and it is a blessing that she has, for I mean to make some flowers of good grow out of the rubbish. She likes me, because she knew me once, in very bad plight; and she tolerates Hugh, because he was formerly a page. Now you are so much above her, she cannot bear the sight of you! you make her loathe herself, while mamma irritates her. Besides, we must remember she is very ill, and that makes her temper worse than it naturally is; and it always was bad, goodness knows."

"You have a hard task before you, Mimi."

"But, ah! Nest, if I succeed?"

"Then, Mimi, you will have your reward."

"Don't you love to see mamma now, Nessie, with her white hair contrasting so wonderfully with her dark eyes? The latter so soft and beautiful, and the former so like white silk.

Don't you remember, when I used to say, she was as ugly as a rat, little wretch that I was! Well, now, I think her beautiful! her figure has become as erect and stately as ever; but her face, so calm, so clear, so good! Her expression becomes holy, Nest, when she looks at you!"

"Ah! Mimi, when I was going to be married, I sat at my grandmother's knee, and thought, I am afraid, more of the mother and sisters I was to have, than my Frank! It was natural I should think sometimes of being married, and having a husband, because my dear granny was almost always alluding to it. She feared so much to leave me alone. She felt her health failing her. But when I heard I was to have a mother and sisters, ah! Mimi, I loved you all, to that degree, no true daughter or sister could love more! and I wondered my Frank told me no more about them; or rather, that he spoke of his mother with evident fear, of one sister with dislike, and of the other with pity!

It was well I was prepared, for the disappointment would have been too much for me, I know."

"What did you really think of me?" said Mimi.

"I was amazed at you, Mimi, and after you left me, cried for an hour."

"And after I went, I sang for an hour. I dreamt of you all night, and I longed for the day, if only to see that sweet face once more. See! there is Hugh, looking everywhere for me; now I will hide behind the screen, and let me draw the window-curtain before you. I have a mind to see what he will do. Your very clever men are always so confident; they know everything, and are not to be outwitted by a woman."

Nest laughed, and consented.

Hugh came springing into the room; a blank look of dismay came over his face, as he saw it was empty.

"Where can she be?" he muttered; "I have not seen her these four hours."

Mimi, from behind her screen, made a series of signs to Nest, who could just see her, to explain the "her," meant herself; Nest, with a little nod of indignation, gave her to understand, she was quite aware of the fact.

Meantime Hugh threw himself down impatiently on a chair, that he seemed to think Mimi had occupied, for her workbox was near it. With the impudence of a husband, he began to examine its contents; first, he looked at and kissed her little thimble; he might have been about to do the same by her scissors, but he suddenly caught sight of the work she had been about, and with a glow of delight, he drew forth a little tiny cap. Nest enjoyed Mimi's confusion; she seemed about to rush out, and upbraid him, when steps were heard; known to all, was that firm tread. Hugh concealed the cap in a hurry, and took up a book, as uncon-

cerned as possible. Mimi composed herself; Nest drew further within her curtain. The door opened, and Elmore entered.

"Where are the ladies?" exclaimed he.

"I know not," said Hugh; "I was much disappointed not to find them here."

"Lady Gomer is here," said Elmore, "I am certain. Ah! that curtain is moved. Why, Nest, when did you learn to play bo-peep?"

"You are too bad, Elmore, coming in with your sharp eyes, and spoiling all our fun," exclaimed Mimi, emerging from her concealment.

"I did not use my eyes, my dear Countess."

"How did you discover Nest, then?"

"Franz gave his mother some violets this morning. She put them safe away, as befitted so sweet a present, from so sweet a giver, and I scented them as I entered the room."

"And why did not you discover us, for the same reason, Hugh?"

"Because I was not looking for violets, like his Grace."

"No, he was taking the opportunity of trying to find out a new machine, into which he could put a little baby, and it should come out at the other end, a fine, well-grown, walking, talking, child, with all its teeth cut, and the last new fashionable buttons on its jacket; in no need of a wretched little cap, like this," continued the Duke, whisking out of its hasty hiding-place the little cap, that had caused Hugh such delight to look at.

"Hugh, take it from him. It is not a cap, Elmore, and nothing like it, so you are wrong."

"What is it then? I will give it back, if you will give me a reasonable idea as to what it is."

"It is the cover of a pincushion."

"My respected parent has frills round hers."

"But this is a plain one."

"Also, she does not make them of French cambric. I am very learned on that subject, having studied the matter in France. This must have cost eight shillings a yard; pretty

expensive cover to a pincushion. However, take it, my dear Countess. At the rate the world is galloping now, I expect Dukes will follow the plough, Duchesses go out as char-women; while engineers and engine-makers, kettle and cauldron boilers, will eat off gold, live in castles, and have the best French cambric for their pincushions."

"I will hire Nest at once, then, for my maid-of-all-work," said Mimi.

"But I am not a Duchess," answered Nest, smiling innocently.

"But you might be; it is your own fault—"

Mimi stopped abruptly; Nest looked up amazed, and caught the glowing, ardent eyes of Elmore, fixed upon her countenance.

A dead silence fell on the whole party, as blush after blush rose upon Nest's cheek. Both Mimi and Elmore saw the perception of the real truth was breaking upon her. She turned her speaking eyes upon Mimi, whose look in answer was half triumphant, half confused, and so en-

treating, that again Nest looked away. This time, her eyes fell upon Hugh. His fine face was in a glow, his deep, beautiful eyes were bent, with the wonderful power of his race, on the Duke, expressing so much concern and hope, that Nest involuntarily glanced the same way.

Elmore had bitten his lips until the blood came; his face was deadly pale, but his eyes still glowed like fire.

"You have torn my cap—pincushion I mean," exclaimed Mimi, recovering her wits. "What great stupid things men are!"

"Yes, Mimi dear," said her husband, also coming to the rescue; "accustomed as we are to pots and pans, no wonder his Grace——"

"Has been so graceless," said Elmore, in his usual calm voice, though the effort to make it so, caused the little delicate shred of cambric to shrivel in his grasp.

Nest sighed, as if from her heart, and turning, left the room.

The remaining three looked at each other for a moment in silence.

"She was not angry, Elmore," said Mimi.

"She could not be," exclaimed Hugh.

"Yet, Mimi, she was not pleased," answered Elmore.

CHAPTER XXI.

"LADY Jane, the six months are over, may I begin to show my hopes and wishes?"

"Dear Elmore," said Lady Jane, smiling, "as if you could hide them."

"I did though, once, and had to keep my promise to you, by half breaking my neck over the terrace wall. Do you think I have any chance?"

"I cannot tell, Elmore; she relies on you for all advice and assistance, and once she said to me, 'You know, mamma, I give Elmore more trouble than I need, because he so dislikes a managing, independent woman.'"

"When you left, to attend poor Augusta's last moments, Jane, I made her feel what it was to be dull."

"That was unkind, and unlike you, Elmore."

"But I was very sly. I told her, in your absence, it was not proper that I should come over to Gomer, without my mother."

"Dear Elmore, who could have thought you would have been such a thorough boy?"

"With her, you see, I am obliged to make use of every weapon I can. Have you good news of Mimi?"

"Yes, very, she seems to rejoice that her boy has such a gipsy complexion. I was afraid her health might suffer, with all her attendance and care on poor Augusta."

"Ah no, how could you fear that, when all her sisterly affection was so well rewarded? The thought of Augusta can now only make you happy, Jane."

"It does, and I needed something to cheer me, if I am to lose my Nest."

"May your words prove prophetic. I see her going to the rose-garden; I have some business with her of one sort, and will do a little of my own at the same time."—

"I am very glad to find you in the garden, Nest, for I wished to consult you about an important matter."

"I am all attention, Elmore; though, as I saw you yesterday, I cannot imagine what very important business has risen up in such a hurry."

"It is this. I went, not long ago, to see old Malcolm; I have a great respect for the old fellow; it has arisen of late, that is, ever since his kindness to that unhappy Augusta. No one knows, Nest, what a life she led him, poor fellow! bad as her mother was, she was an angel to Augusta. Well! I went to see him. He has his little property, as he calls it, in first-

rate order, and everything in such clock-work fashion (he really has shown a vast deal of cleverness and knowledge, such as I never gave him credit for), that he has left himself little or nothing to do, but to wind up his machine of duty in the morning, and away it goes without further trouble for the day. So he has become a little moped, for want of something to do."

"And he has a nephew living with him, has he not, to help him?"

"Yes, he has. But now I am coming to the pith of the matter. What do you say to offering him the superintendence and care of the Gomer estates, now Wilson is going? I suppose you know that. Since his eighth son was born, he has been thinking of nothing but going to Australia, where there is room, and to spare, for eight sons. He rightly thinks that Gomer cannot provide agencies for the whole lot, and wishes to make a settlement in the New World while they are young."

"Would mamma quite like her husband to be agent where he once ruled?"

"Ah! that's the rub. But she seems to have swallowed such mountains of pride, perhaps she may take this last gulp."

"Suppose we offer it to him, and then, if I judge him rightly, he will consult with mamma, and they will settle it between themselves, as they deem most fitting and proper."

"That is just my opinion. In fact, on many subjects you and I think alike, Nest; do you not find it so?"

"No, cousin," said Nest, archly; "you will spoil Franz."

"Take care, take care; if you are saucy, I will give up the trust."

"But perhaps Mr. Malcolm may do instead."

"Nest! Nest!"

"Don't be angry, cousin, you know I am joking;" and she laid her hand on his lips.

He held it there, kissing it, until she grew crimson.

"I will not let it go, until you say you are sorry for such an unkind speech."

"I am, I am, very sorry; but you knew it was not true."

"How could I tell?" and he drew her towards him, looking into her eyes, until they drooped with confusion; and she said hurriedly,

"Franz and I cannot part with you; we are your charge, your little and big child. We should feel lonely and desolate, if we had no kind cousin to fly to in all difficulties and troubles; and,—and—we should not like to be left to ourselves; we like to be loved and cared for."

"And this is what you and Franz think?"

He looked as if about to press his lips to her forehead, but suddenly letting her go, he said:

"There, get away, I was nearly forgetting a

promise I made; I suppose I may ride with you to-morrow? I will meet you at the fourth milestone, at three o'clock."

But he met her at the first one.

CHAPTER XXII.

"MAMMA, how often Elmore comes here."

"Yes, love."

"And you encourage him, mamma. You ask him back again—you send him out with me—you let little Franz call him papa, instead of god-papa. I think, mamma, he comes for a purpose."

"I know he does, my child."

Nest knelt down by her mother, and looked up into her face, with troubled eyes.

"He loves you, Nest, he loved you long ago. He went abroad because he envied Frank, and his heart was too good and noble to bear such

a shame upon it, as loving the wife of another."

"Was this the reason, then, that I lost him, as I wanted him?" murmured Nest.

"Nearly three years are gone, my Nessie, since Frank left us, and Elmore has nothing now to prevent his love filling his heart. Nest, he saw your worth from the first moment you came here. He was ever the same to you; your best, earliest friend, yours and Frank's."

"I know it," again murmured Nest.

"I am certain that had he not felt he could meet you and Frank again with clear, unsullied eyes, he never would have returned. The gift of so good a heart, Nessie, is worth the acceptance of the highest, noblest."

"I know that, too, mamma, and therefore I feel that for that heart, he should have another, fresh, pure, unsullied; one that had ever been his own, and not in the keeping of another."

"True, my Nest; but if he thinks not so,

why should you? Besides, he was loved before."

"He has told me his story, mamma, and I felt pity for him; so full of fine and sweet affections, to be thus crushed, as it were."

"Yes, Nest, and if he is again disappointed, think what that tender heart may suffer."

Nest was silent, the pure thoughts ran so eloquently over her face, that Lady Jane read them as they passed. Once more Nest raised her loving eyes, and said:

"You know, mamma, none ever lived with so many affections to bestow, and with so few on whom to lavish them, as myself. I am not likely to throw away a love that would bring me such a sweet fund of happiness in its train. Indeed, I have no other feeling but gratitude, that my life may be placed under the care of one who loves my child so fondly."

"Then why hesitate, Nessie? Believe me, if you have any fond feelings about your

Frank, he would have wished no better lot for his idolized Nest."

"I think so, mamma."

"Then, Nessie, give Elmore some hope, some encouragement. It is six months since he told me of his wishes; but partly because he feared your scruples might tell against him, partly because he wished to accustom me to the chance of losing you, my Nessie—"

"Ah! mamma, it is that. Remember I am your Nest, you are my mother. We are not to part."

"See, Nest, read that letter. Then give me your advice."

It was from Mr. Malcolm to Lady Jane, and was as follows:

"My dear Jane,

"Your daughter Nest, and the Duke of Nairn, have offered me the agency of the Gomer estates, in place of Mr. Wilson. Now I own I should like to accept this offer—I want employ-

ment. I should like a busy, active life, lest the devil should make me prisoner again. I have done all I can to my little estate, and have it in such order, that I have but little to do. My nephew has fallen in love with a deuced pretty girl, not far from here, and I was thinking it would amuse me a little, to let them marry and live with me. But I have had some qualms about it; fearing that old and young may not get on well, after a year or two. Then I shall have done mischief instead of good. But if I accept this agency, I shall not only have plenty of work, but I can let these two fond things marry, and live in my house, and I shall be able to spare them a couple of hundred pounds a year or so. But I will dismiss such thoughts from my mind, unless you consent. For, besides all that I have said above, I must tell you another thing; I shall not be able to live so near you, without remembering that you are my wife. I manage pretty well at this distance; but when near you, and seeing (excuse me)

what you are now, I doubt I shall take to wooing of you again. And I would have you weigh well the consequences of such a thing. I would say a great deal more, especially about this last business, if it were any good. For I think it but right to tell you, that for some time past now, a wish to be once restored to my proper place in your affections, is the daily prayer of your affectionate husband,

"CONSTANTINE MALCOLM."

"Dear Mr. Malcolm," said Nest, "that is a great deal for him to say."

"Yes, Nest, and what is your advice?"

"I could not advise you, mamma."

"Then, my child, though I cannot say I like it, though I have shed bitter tears over the resolution, I have counselled him to accept the offer, and, Nest, I go with him, to Mr. Wilson's house. I mean to be the wife of the agent of Gomer."

"That, mamma, shall never be," said Nest,

eagerly, "that is, you shall never go to Mr. Wilson's house. That you and Mr. Malcolm should again be under one roof, I like, mamma, and it pleases me to think that you have so decided."

"But, love, I will never put so great a trouble on you, as to have ever before your sight the two people who wronged you so."

"Nay, mamma, speak not of it. We will settle something—"

"You and Elmore, Nessie?"

"I know not yet, mamma," said Nest, blushing; "but dear Mr. Malcolm shall come, and you and he shall be happy again together; and, dear mamma, you will feel that you are making two people happy, him and myself."

"And one other also, I hope, Nest."

CHAPTER XXIII.

"WELL, Nest! for what did you send to me? Stewart says, I am never away from this place."

"I did not send, cousin."

"Lady Jane told me, you wanted me."

"Ah! cousin, but you must have come here first, before she could have told you that."

"Perhaps I did; but what is the business?"

"It is not mine, cousin, it is mamma's. Did she not tell you that she has counselled Mr. Malcolm to accept the agency of the Gomer estates, and she is going to live with him again? They are not going to separate any more; but

she says she will go and live in Mr. Wilson's house. Now, cousin, that must not be."

"Of course not, she and Mr. Malcolm shall live at Gomer."

"And I and Franz?" exclaimed Nest.

"I have a home for you both, Nest, elsewhere. You know it. Say, will you dwell there?

"Where?" she whispered.

"Here, in my heart of hearts. You know my story. It is no secret to you, whom I would have, to give as a daughter to my mother; but, in deference to your fond regrets, but, in pity to your mother's wishes, but, in fear for my own fate, have I kept my wishes secret; yet not secret. Ah! Nest, that day that Mimi so inadvertently let slip the fact; when my eyes met yours, unable to conceal the truth, did they not tell you that my all of happiness, in this world, depends on you and Franz? Say, can you love me?"

"Yes," she whispered.

"Not a grateful love; not a forced, pitiful love."

"Not a forced love," again she whispered.

"The love that a wife gives her husband; the heart's love."

"My heart's love," she answered clearly.

"Let me look into your eyes, they tell truth always."

She raised them. They were filled with tears, but shone happy and confiding through them. Nevertheless, unable to bear the passionate, unutterable love expressed in his, she hid her face against his broad heaving breast.

"My God!" he said, raising one hand to heaven, "I thank thee for this gift of happiness. I devote myself to the helpmeet you have given me; I fulfil, my Frank, the trust you gave to my charge, and will spend my life in guarding it."

Then folding one arm round her, in strong embrace, he raised her face with the other hand, kissing her passionately on the lips, cheek, and eyes, pouring forth such a flow of love and adoration, such a store of long pent-up wishes, such tender, loving words, such fond, endearing

epithets, that Nest could only hide her confusion and her blushes, by clinging closer to him.

"My Nest, my Nessie, long-loved, deeply, wholly loved, how am I to thank you enough, for blessing my mother and me? If you knew how I have wearied her, and tormented myself, you would forgive me so wildly, madly, sealing thus and thus the right you have given me. Oh! my Nest, how can I feel otherwise? how can I act, but as the veriest love-sick boy? for the dream of my boyhood is accomplished."

"Ah! hush!" said Nest, "you do not know, you cannot tell—"

"Do I not know? can I not tell? when I have studied your character, and worshipped it more and more as I knew it? But you were angry with me, that day, my Nest, my own, when Mimi let out my secret."

"No, not angry, but—but, Mimi had said—we had been talking—"

"About what, love? see, I will hold you

prisoner until you tell me. Your struggles are useless, dearest, sweetest, loveliest—"

"Oh! don't, Elmore, who could have thought you would be so silly?"

"But tell me."

"I asked Mimi who was the second person you had seen."

"Did you, did you really, wilfully blind Nest? you must be punished."

"I will not say another word, Elmore."

"Well, go on, I have done. What flashing eyes some one has, when she is angry."

"And Mimi said she knew her, and she was cold-hearted, and cared more for being thought well of by the world than for your love, and that she should, in the end, hate her; and when—when I saw and knew, these words of Mimi's came to my mind, and I left the room in a hurry, and so—so ever since I have been thinking if I could bear to have Mimi hate me."

"I shall write to Mimi to-night, and tell her

that rather than have her hatred, you have taken compassion on me."

"No, Elmore, no, I will write to Mimi myself."

"Do so, and let me see the letter. Meantime, my Nest, read that; I might have given it to you before, but I was jealous of owing your love to anything but myself. I was conceited, you will say. You shall punish me when I return; for while you read, I must go and tell Jane."

Nest's eyes overflowed as she recognized the letter, the particular letter that Frank had written to the Duke, just before the duel.

It was as follows.

"Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel."

"Elmore, dearest cousin, best friend, this is what you have said to me, and I am about to exemplify the truth of your judgment. If I fall in this duel, (and I deserve my fate, for my weakness and folly), Elmore, take my Nest, with her boy. Your noble confidence in me is not

misplaced. If you can win her priceless heart, take her as a gift from me. Much as she loves her Frank, that fine nature so like your own, will not be insensible to the love you can give, and together you will not mourn your Frank's early fate the less, because you are happy.

"God bless you both,

"FRANK GOMER."

CHAPTER XXIV.

And Lady Jane was to rule at Gomer, with no son to thwart her, no children to trouble her, no daughter-in-law to spite her.

Sole mistress, sole queen, and this without an effort, without a struggle, walking in no foul path, treading in no dirty way, innocent of all mean arts, sacrificing neither honour nor truth, without any display of passion or temper, upsetting no feelings of love and good feeling, Lady Jane was to rule at Gomer.

And yet, there she lay, sobs bursting from her heart, tears drenching the ground, a bowed-down

miserable, crushed spectacle. Every wound seemed to break out afresh. Every pang was renewed.

What had she not sacrificed to gain this end? a son's life, her only son; and it was through no effort of hers, that other lives followed not his.

"Oh! this cup is too much for me to drink," burst from her aching heart. "I will go from hence, I will fly to distant lands, where, unknown and uncared for, I may die, and be rid of this incessant remembrance, this gnawing conscience. I will go far from this house of past bitterness, I will break away from these ties of love and affection, so strong and binding, because so lately tied. Oh! Nest, my Nest, you know not what you have made me suffer, by proposing such a plan."

But Nest had acted with a purpose. She could see into Lady Jane's heart and feelings as if in a glass. And in proposing that she and Mr. Malcolm should live at Gomer, while she felt that the first pang of such an arrangement

would be bitter to Lady Jane, for her soul's welfare hereafter she deemed it a fitting thing.

If Lady Jane left the scene of all the principal dramas of her life, if she went away from the ties of affection she was now feeling so strongly, Nest felt that her worldly spirit might return. As time went, so would her natural character become what it was, and the impressions of remorse and sorrow be lessened.

In dwelling at Gomer, though her existence might be embittered, her soul would be strengthened and encouraged by penitence and prayer, to carry her spirit on, until it was purified and blest.

Besides, her health was much broken, she needed care and tenderness; and with whatever feelings of humility and remorse Lady Jane might take possession of Gomer, Nest knew it would be happiness to her, to think that she should spend her last days there.

So Nest proved inexorable; and in the happiness of her prospects, in the delight of Mr.

Malcolm at his new and fascinating duties, in his unwearied kindness and devotion to herself, Lady Jane suffered herself to sink into a state of calm peace and content.

CHAPTER XXV.

"My son, I did not know your step; you seem to tread on air!"

"Dearest mother, I have gained her! She is ours! that sweet, gentle, intelligent, lovely being is to be your daughter, and my wife!"

"God be praised! my dearest son; He has indeed blest us, in giving us such a gift."

"At last, you will have a daughter, mother, who will make up for all deficiencies in your wayward, spoilt son, who will wait upon the closing years of your life with all the tender care and thought of a woman's heart; and I,

perhaps I may be too happy; no, not as long as I have Stewart; here he comes, with his frosty face."

"I am just amazed, my Lord Duke, I hae lighted on ye; there's no getting a glink of yer Grace, fra' one Sabbath to anither."

"Indeed, sir!" said the Duke, stiffly.

"Dinna fash me, in ony of yer pride-fu' ways, yer Grace. Dinna I see your een just dancing oot o' yer heed, wi' heart's joy; may be some-at gay has happed."

"May be, Stewart?"

"I ken your Grace knaws I'm mair set-up wi' ony gude news anent Nairn, than yer Grace himself, and I dinna think ye wad be sae unneighbourly, as no to tell a body, when a puir heart might rejoice."

"Perhaps you may not rejoice, Stewart."

"Hoot-awa'! weel, tak yer ain time. I hae ower many matters of grand import to mind, wi'out fashing wi' sma' things."

"Don't be cross, old fellow! this is of grand import."

Stewart looked at him keenly, then at the Duchess, then he gave a sort of Scotch bellow, then he saved her Grace's presence, then he tossed up his hat, then he begged pardon again; at last, he fairly took hold of the Duke's arm, and grasping it, with a good strong hold, that made the owner wince, said—

"Hae ye gotten her? hae ye gotten that bit bonny fair thing?"

"I thought she was only 'pratty,'" said the Duke, struggling out of the iron grasp.

"Ye canna hide it, yer beside yersel; aye, my Leddy Duchess, just say the word. His Grace wad deve St. Michael mad, wi' his fashious ways."

"It is true, indeed, Stewart, and you cannot be more pleased and thankful than I am."

"The Lady Gomer? yer Grace."

"Yes, Stewart, yes."

"Then the Lord be praised! the Lord be guid to us all! the Lord make us duly thankful for a' mercies! but for nane mair nor this.

Pratty! gang fra Scotland to the Indies, and pit a' the beauty and gudeness ye find, into ane body, and ye'll no match our new Duchess! Fitting dame to come in yer Grace's steps. The Lord be gude to us! if I war going to be married mysel, I could na be more pit abute."

"No, no, Stewart, I cannot have you marry."

"Deed, no; I hae mair occasion nor ever to bide wi' ye. Ye'll be nae but a fuil, excuse me, yer Grace, the next twa years; and sae should I, had I gotten such a Jo."

CHAPTER THE LAST.

Four people are sitting in the fair summer parlour. Two old ladies, both with snow-white hair, one more advanced in years than the other, with a heaven-ward look in her calm blue eyes; a slight and bending form. The other erect and stately; but the dark eyes were soft and gentle, a pure calm dwelt within them. A magnificent-looking man, and a most lovely woman, completed the four, and they are speaking to each other, when the door bursts open.

A noble, fair boy enters, with another some few years younger, hanging on to him. The

little one's face is red with passion, his fists are doubled, and he is inflicting blow after blow, with all his little might, on the unresisting elder one.

"Papa," said the little angry fellow, in a blaze of rage, "Franz is very naughty to me."

"What has he done?"

"He says you are his own papa! and you are not. You are my papa, and Lilly's."

"Who told you this, Elmore?"

"Nurse did, and I told Franz; and he says, he does not care what nurse says, you are his papa, his own papa, and he would have no other! But he shall not, papa, say he shall not;" and the little passionate fellow tried to clutch hold of the golden curls of the other boy's hair.

The Duke looked at the elder boy, who stood so calm and silent by his side. The large, deep, grey eyes, looked with loving confidence into the adopted father's face; yet it was an inquiring, questioning look. Nest's eyes they

were, in beauty, colour, love, and the soul's light. The Duke drew the beautiful boy close to his heart, and kissed him, while he said—

"Listen, Elmore. It is true, I am not Franzy's own papa. His father is an angel spirit, who dwells near the throne of God. The great and holy God wanted him to live near him evermore, and bade him leave his little son, and come to Heaven. So he went, and has become an holy angel.

"Then he gave his little son to me, and said, 'You must be his earthly father.' And I said, 'Yes; he shall be to me, as my first-born eldest son.' And he is so. So in the night-time, when sleep is resting on our hearts, the holy angel spirit comes down from heaven, and looks at his son sleeping. If he sees a smile upon his face, he knows he is happy. And he strokes and counts his golden rings of hair, so like his own, and he perceives that they are bright and shining as they ought to be.

"Then the angel spirit breathes a prayer of

blessing on my house; he fills my heart with pleasant, sweet dreams; he gives me a little son of my own, to play with, love, and be a brother to his son. But he gives him dark raven curls, and rosy cheeks, only the angel spirit's son has these rings of gold, these starlike eyes, to show that he has a seraph father; a holy seraph father, who wings his way from earth to heaven, bearing righteous souls and holy prayers, breathed by mortal lips to the foot of the Saviour's cross."

"Franz," whispered the little one, with a look of awe and wonder, "love me."

Franz put his willing arm round the neck of his brother, but never took his eyes from his adopted father's face, who continued—"Then if we are good, the holy spirit carries our wishes and prayers to heaven. But if I am unkind to his little son, if I suffer any one to ill-treat him, the angel father folds his wings, and weeps at a distance. No prayers are taken to heaven, no sun shines on the house, cross and evil spirits

enter therein, because no angel guards the door. And the rings of gold fade on the little son's head; he weeps, and his angel father hears the cry, and he wings his way up, sorrowing and mourning, to heaven, and God sees that the earthly father is not good to the son of the angel father."

"Oh, papa, papa, I am so sorry; oh, papa, pray to God to forgive me; tell the angel father, I am sorry; I will never more be angry with my brother. Oh, Franz, dear Franz, ask your angel father to be my father too."

The golden rings of hair mix with the raven curls, and the eyes of the younger boy meet the loving glance of the elder one, and evermore he looks with love and awe on the spirit-father's son.

"My Nest, how your eyes speak," said her husband, bending over her, after the boys had lovingly left the room, encircled in each other's arms. "Shall I tell you what they say?"

She smiled an affirmative.

He whispered in her ear—

"They said, 'I love you, Elmore, I am happy.'"

She stole her hand into his, and whispered back, "If they said no more, my husband, they did not speak enough."

THE END.

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